



THE WORKS  
OF  
THE REV. RICHARD WATSON.

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VOLUME XII.

CONTAINING  
THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTES.  
AND  
CATECHISM ON THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.  
WITH  
A GENERAL INDEX TO THE WORKS.

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# CONTENTS.

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## PART II. CONTINUED.

### CHAPTER XXIX.

	Page
<i>Redemption :—Further Benefits. ....</i>	3

## PART THIRD.

### THE MORALS OF CHRISTIANITY.

#### CHAPTER I.

<i>The Moral Law . . . . .</i>	27
--------------------------------	----

#### II.

<i>The Duties we owe to God. ....</i>	44
---------------------------------------	----

#### III.

<i>The Duties we owe to God :—The Lord's Day . . . . .</i>	81
--	----

#### IV.

<i>Morals :—Duties to our Neighbour . . . . .</i>	103
---	-----

## PART FOURTH.

### THE INSTITUTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY.

#### CHAPTER I.

<i>The Christian Church. ....</i>	166
-----------------------------------	-----



## CHAPTER II.

	Page.
<i>Institutions of Christianity :—The Sacraments</i> . . . . .	212

## III.

<i>The Institutions of the Church :—Baptism</i> . . . . .	222
---	-----

## IV.

<i>The Institutions of the Church :—The Lord's Supper</i> . . . . .	286
---	-----

## C A T E C H I S M

## ON THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

## CHAPTER I.

<i>Definitions and Explanations</i> . . . . .	303
---	-----

## II.

<i>A Revelation from God highly probable and necessary</i> . . . . .	306
--	-----

## III.

<i>The Evidence by which a Revelation may be satisfactorily proved to be divine</i> . . . . .	318
---	-----

## IV.

<i>The Antiquity, Genuineness, and Authenticity of the Books of Scripture</i> . . . . .	332
---	-----

## V.

<i>Internal Evidence of the Truth of Scripture</i> . . . . .	351
--	-----

## VI.

<i>Objections answered</i> . . . . .	361
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# THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTES:

OR,

A VIEW

OF

THE EVIDENCES, DOCTRINES, MORALS, AND  
INSTITUTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY

THEOLOGICÆ autem objectum est ipse Deus. Habent aliæ omnes scientiæ sua objecta, nobilia certe, et digna in quibus humana mens considerandis tempus, otium, et diligentiam adhibeat. Hæc una circa Ens entium et Causam causarum, circa Principium naturæ, et gratiæ in natura existentis, naturæ adsistentis, et naturam circumstantis, versatur. Dignissimum itaque hoc est Objectum et plenum venerandæ Majestatis, præcellensque reliquis.

ARMINIUS.

FIFTH EDITION.



# THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTES.

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## PART SECOND.

DOCTRINES OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, CONTINUED.

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### CHAPTER XXIX.

*Redemption.—Further Benefits.*

HAVING endeavoured to establish the doctrine of the universal redemption of the human race, the enumeration of the leading blessings which flow from it may now be resumed. We have already spoken of justification, adoption, regeneration, and the witness of the Holy Spirit; and we proceed to another as distinctly marked, and as graciously promised, in the Holy Scriptures: This is the entire sanctification, or the perfected holiness, of believers; and as this doctrine, in some of its respects, has been the subject of controversy, the scriptural evidence of it must be appealed to and examined. Happily for us, a subject of so great importance is not involved in obscurity.

That a distinction exists between a regenerate state, and a state of entire and perfect holiness, will be generally allowed. Regeneration, we have seen, is concomitant with justification; but the Apostles, in addressing the body of believers in the churches to whom they wrote their Epistles, set before them, both in the prayers they offer in their behalf, and in the

exhortations they administer, a still higher degree of deliverance from sin, as well as a higher growth in Christian virtues. Two passages only need be quoted to prove this : " And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly ; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. v. 23.) " Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. vii. 1.) In both these passages deliverance from sin is the subject spoken of ; and the prayer in one instance, and the exhortation in the other, go to the extent of the entire sanctification of the soul and spirit, as well as of the flesh or body, from all sin ; by which can only be meant our complete deliverance from all spiritual pollution, all inward depravation of the heart, as well as that which, expressing itself outwardly by the indulgence of the senses is called " filthiness of the flesh."

The attainableness of such a state is not so much a matter of debate among Christians, as the time when we are authorized to expect it. For as it is an axiom of Christian doctrine, that " without holiness no man can see the Lord ;" and as it is equally clear that if we would " be found of him in peace," we must be found " without spot, and blameless ;" and that the church will be presented by Christ to the Father without fault ; so it must be concluded, unless, on the one hand, we greatly pervert the sense of these passages, or, on the other, admit the doctrine of purgatory or some intermediate purifying institution, that the entire sanctification of the soul, and its complete renewal in holiness, must take place in this world.

Whilst this is generally acknowledged, however, among spiritual Christians, it has been warmly contended by many, that the final stroke, which destroys our natural corruption, is only given at death ; and that the soul, when separated from the body, and not before, is capable of that immaculate purity which these passages, doubtless, exhibit to our hope.

If this view can be refuted, then it must follow, unless a purgatory of some description be allowed after death, that the

entire sanctification of believers at any time previous to their dissolution, and in the full sense of these evangelic promises, is attainable.

To the opinion in question, then, there appear to be the following fatal objections :—

1. That we nowhere find the promises of entire sanctification restricted to the article of death, either expressly, or in fair inference from any passage of holy Scripture.

2. That we nowhere find the circumstance of the soul's union with the body represented as a necessary obstacle to its entire sanctification.

The principal passage which has been urged in proof of this from the New Testament, is that part of the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, in which St. Paul, speaking in the first person of the bondage of the flesh, has been supposed to describe his state as a believer in Christ. But, whether he speaks of himself, or describes the state of others in a supposed case, given for the sake of more vivid representation in the first person, which is much more probable, he is clearly speaking of a person who had once sought justification by the works of the law, but who was then convinced, by the force of a spiritual apprehension of the extent of the acquirements of that law, and by constant failures in his attempts to keep it perfectly, that he was in bondage to his corrupt nature, and could only be delivered from this thralldom by the interposition of another. For, not to urge that his strong expressions of being “carnal,” “sold under sin,” and doing always “the things which he would not,” are utterly inconsistent with that moral state of believers in Christ which he describes in the next chapter; and, especially, that he there declares that such as are in Christ Jesus “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;” the seventh chapter itself contains decisive evidence against the inference which the advocates of the necessary continuance of sin till death have drawn from it. The Apostle declares the person whose case he describes to be under the law, and not in a state of deliverance by Christ; and then he represents him not only as despairing of self-deliverance, and as praying for the interposition of a sufficiently powerful deli-

verer, but as thanking God that the very deliverance for which he groans is appointed to be administered to him by Jesus Christ: "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

This is also so fully confirmed by what the Apostle had said in the preceding chapter, where he unquestionably describes the moral state of true believers, that nothing is more surprising than that so perverted a comment upon the seventh chapter, as that to which we have adverted, should have been adopted or persevered in: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin." So clearly does the Apostle show that he who is bound to the "body of death," as mentioned in the seventh chapter, is not in the state of a believer; and that he who has a true faith in Christ "is freed from sin."

It is somewhat singular, that the Divines of the Calvinistic school should be almost uniformly the zealous advocates of the doctrine of the continuance of in-dwelling sin till death; but it is but justice to say, that several of them have as zealously denied that the Apostle, in the seventh chapter of the Romans, describes the state of one who is justified by faith in Christ; and very properly consider the case there spoken of as that of one struggling in legal bondage, and brought to that point of self-despair and of conviction of sin and helplessness which must always precede an entire trust in the merits of Christ's death, and the power of his salvation.

3. The doctrine before us is disproved by those passages

of Scripture which connect our entire sanctification with subsequent habits and acts, to be exhibited in the conduct of believers before death. So in the quotation from Romans vi. just given: "Knowing this, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." So the exhortation in 2 Corinthians vii. 1, also given above, refers to the present life, and not to the future hour of our dissolution; and in 1 Thessalonians v. 23, the Apostle first prays for the entire sanctification of the Thessalonians, and then for their preservation in that hallowed state, "unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

4. It is disproved, also, by all those passages which require us to bring forth those graces and virtues which are usually called "the fruits of the Spirit." That these are to be produced during our life, and to be displayed in our spirit and conduct, cannot be doubted; and we may then ask, whether they are required of us in perfection and maturity. If so, in this degree of maturity and perfection, they necessarily suppose the entire sanctification of the soul from the opposite and antagonist evils. Meekness in its perfection supposes the extinction of all sinful anger; perfect love to God supposes that no affection remains contrary to it; and so of every other perfect internal virtue. The inquiry, then, is reduced to this, whether these graces, in such perfection as to exclude the opposite corruptions of the heart, are of possible attainment. If they are not, then we cannot love God with our whole hearts; then we must be sometimes sinfully angry; and how, in that case, are we to interpret that perfectness in these graces which God hath required of us, and promised to us in the Gospel? For if the perfection meant (and let it be observed that this is a scriptural term, and must mean something) be so comparative as that we may be sometimes sinfully angry, and may sometimes divide our hearts between God and the creature, we may apply the same comparative sense of the term to good words and to good works, as well as to good affections. Thus, when the Apostle prays for the Hebrews, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood



of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will," we must understand this perfection of evangelical good works, so that it shall sometimes give place to opposite evil works, just as good affections must necessarily sometimes give place to the opposite bad affections. This view can scarcely be soberly entertained by any enlightened Christian; and it must, therefore, be concluded, that the standard of our attainable Christian perfection, as to the affections, is a love of God so perfect, as to "rule the heart" and exclude all rivalry, and a meekness so perfect as to cast out all sinful anger and prevent its return; and that as to good works, the rule is, that we shall be so "perfect in every good work," as to "do the will of God" habitually, fully, and constantly. If we fix the standard lower, we let in a license totally inconsistent with that Christian purity which is allowed by all to be attainable, and we make every man himself his own interpreter of that comparative perfection which is often contended for as that only which is attainable.

Some, it is true, admit the extent of the promises and the requirements of the Gospel as we have stated them; but they contend, that this is the mark at which we are to aim, the standard towards which we are to aspire, though neither is attainable fully till death. But this view cannot be true as applied to sanctification, or deliverance from all inward and outward sin. That the degree of every virtue implanted by grace is not limited, but advances and grows in the living Christian throughout life, may be granted; and through eternity also: But to say that these virtues are not attainable, through the work of the Spirit, in that degree which shall destroy all opposite vice, is to say, that God, under the Gospel, requires us to be what we cannot be, either through want of efficacy in his grace, or from some defect in its administration; neither of which has any countenance from Scripture, nor is at all consistent with the terms in which the promises and exhortations of the Gospel are expressed. It is also contradicted by our own consciousness, which charges our criminal neglects and failures upon ourselves, and not upon the grace of God, as though it were insufficient. Either the con-

sciences of good men have in all ages been delusive and over scrupulous, or this doctrine of the necessary, though occasional, dominion of sin over us is false.

5. The doctrine of the necessary indwelling of sin in the soul till death, involves other anti-scriptural consequences. It supposes that the seat of sin is in the flesh; and thus harmonizes with the pagan philosophy, which attributed all evil to matter. The doctrine of the Bible, on the contrary, is, that the seat of sin is in the soul; and it makes it one of the proofs of the fall and corruption of our spiritual nature, that we are in bondage to the appetites and motions of the flesh. Nor does the theory which places the necessity of sinning in the connexion of the soul with the body account for the whole moral case of man. There are sins, as pride, covetousness, malice, and others, which are wholly spiritual; and yet no exception is made in this doctrine of the necessary continuance of sin till death as to them. There is, surely, no need to wait for the separation of the soul from the body in order to be saved from evils which are the sole offspring of the spirit; and yet these are made as inevitable as the sins which more immediately connect themselves with the excitements of the animal nature.

This doctrine supposes, too, that the flesh must necessarily not only lust against the spirit, but in no small degree, and on many occasions, be the conqueror; whereas, we are commanded to mortify the deeds of the body; to crucify, that is, to put to death, the flesh; to "put off the old man," which, in its full meaning, must import separation from sin in fact, as well as the renunciation of it in will; and to "put on the new man." Finally: The Apostle expressly states, that though the flesh stands victoriously opposed to legal sanctification, it is not insuperable by evangelical holiness:—"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Romans viii. 3, 4.) So inconsistent with the declarations and promises of the Gospel is the notion, that, so

long as we are in the body, the flesh must of necessity have at least the occasional dominion.

We conclude, therefore, as to the time of our complete sanctification; or, to use the phrase of the Apostle Paul, "the destruction of the body of sin;" that it can neither be referred to the hour of death, nor placed subsequently to this present life. The attainment of perfect freedom from sin is one to which believers are called during the present life; and is necessary to that completeness of holiness, and of those active and passive graces of Christianity, by which they are called to glorify God in this world, and to edify mankind.

Not only the time, but the manner also, of our sanctification has been matter of controversy; some contending that all attainable degrees of it are acquired by the process of gradual mortification and the acquisition of holy habits; others alleging it to be instantaneous, and the fruit of an act of faith in the divine promises.

That the regeneration which accompanies justification is a large approach to this state of perfected holiness, and that all dying to sin, and all growth in grace, advance us nearer to this point of entire sanctity, is so obvious, that on these points there can be no reasonable dispute. But they are not at all inconsistent with a more instantaneous work, when, the depth of our natural depravity being more painfully felt, we plead in faith the accomplishment of the promises of God. The great question to be settled is, whether the deliverance sighed after be held out to us in these promises as a present blessing? And, from what has been already said, there appears no ground to doubt this; since no small violence would be offered to the passages of Scripture already quoted, as well as to many others, by the opposite opinion. All the promises of God which are not expressly, or from their order, referred to future time, are objects of present trust; and their fulfilment now is made conditional only upon our faith. They cannot, therefore, be pleaded in our prayers, with an entire reliance upon the truth of God, in vain. The general promise that we shall receive "all things whatsoever we ask in prayer, believing," comprehends, of course, all things suited to

our case which God has engaged to bestow ; and if the entire renewal of our nature be included in the number, without any limitation of time, except that in which we ask it in faith, then to this faith shall the promises of entire sanctification be given ; which, in the nature of the case, supposes an instantaneous work immediately following upon our entire and unwavering faith.

The only plausible objections made to this doctrine may be answered in few words :—

It has been urged, that this state of entire sanctification supposes future impeccability. Certainly not ; for if angels and our first parents fell when in a state of immaculate sanctity, the renovated man cannot be placed, by his entire deliverance from inward sin, out of the reach of danger. This remark, also, answers the allegation, that we should thus be removed out of the reach of temptation ; for the example of angels and of the first man, who fell by temptation when in a state of native purity, proves that the absence of inward evil is not inconsistent with a state of probation ; and that this, in itself, is no guard against the attempts and solicitations of evil.

It has been objected, too, that this supposed state renders the atonement and intercession of Christ superfluous in future. But the very contrary of this is manifest when the case of an evangelical renewal of the soul in righteousness is understood. This proceeds from the grace of God in Christ, through the Holy Spirit, as the efficient cause ; it is received by faith as the instrumental cause ; and the state itself into which we are raised is maintained, not by inherent, native power, but by the continual presence and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit himself, received and retained in answer to ceaseless prayer ; which prayer has respect solely to the merits of the death and intercession of Christ.

It has been further alleged, that a person delivered from all inward and outward sin has no longer need to use the petition of the Lord's prayer, " And forgive us our trespasses," because he has no longer need of pardon. To this we reply, 1. That it would be absurd to suppose that any person is placed under the necessity of trespassing, in order that a general prayer

designed for men in a mixed condition might retain its aptness to every particular case. 2. That trespassing of every kind and degree is not supposed by this prayer to be continued, in order that it might be used always in the same import, or otherwise it might be pleaded against the renunciation of any trespass or transgression whatever. 3. That this petition is still relevant to the case of the entirely sanctified and the evangelically perfect, since neither the perfection of the first man, nor that of angels, is in question ; that is, a perfection measured by the perfect law, which, in its obligations, contemplates all creatures as having sustained no injury by moral lapse, and admits, therefore, of no excuse from infirmities and mistakes of judgment ; nor of any degree of obedience below that which beings created naturally perfect were capable of rendering. There may, however, be an entire sanctification of a being rendered naturally weak and imperfect, and so liable to mistake and infirmity, as well as to defect in the degree of that absolute obedience and service which the law of God, never bent or lowered to human weakness, demands from all. These defects, and mistakes, and infirmities, may be quite consistent with the entire sanctification of the soul, and the moral maturity of a being still naturally infirm and imperfect. Still, further, if this were not a sufficient answer, it may be remarked, that we are not the ultimate judges of our own case as to our trespasses, or our exemption from them ; and we are not, therefore, to put ourselves into the place of God, "who is greater than our hearts." So, although St. Paul says, "I know nothing by myself," that is, I am conscious of no offence, he adds, "Yet am I not hereby justified ; but he that judgeth me is the Lord ;" to whom, therefore, the appeal is every moment to be made through Christ the Mediator, and who, by the renewed testimony of his Spirit, assures every true believer of his acceptance in his sight.

Another benefit which accrues to all true believers, is the right to pray, with the special assurance that they shall be heard in all things which are according to the will of God. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we

ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." It is under this gracious institution that all good men are constituted intercessors for others, even for the whole world; and that God is pleased to order many of his dispensations, both as to individuals and to nations, in reference to "his elect who cry day and night unto him."

With respect to every real member of the body or church of Christ, the providence of God is special; in other words, they are individually considered in the administration of the affairs of this life by the sovereign Ruler, and their measure of good and of evil is appointed with constant reference to their advantage, either in this life or in eternity. "The hairs of their head" are, therefore, said to be "numbered;" and all things are declared to work together for their good.

To them also victory over death is awarded. They are freed from its fear in respect of consequences in another state; for the apprehension of future punishment is removed by the remission of their sins, and the attestation of this to their minds by the Holy Spirit; whilst a patient resignation to the will of God, as to the measure of their bodily sufferings, and the strong hopes and joyful anticipations of a better life, cancel and subdue that horror of pain and dissolution which is natural to man. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage." (Heb. ii. 14, 15.)

The immediate reception of the soul into a state of blessedness after death is also another of the glorious promises of the new covenant, to all them that endure to the end, and "die in the Lord."

This is so explicitly taught in the New Testament that, but for the admission of a philosophical error, it would, probably, have never been doubted by any persons professing to receive that book as of divine authority. Till in recent times the belief in the materiality of the human soul was chiefly confined to those who entirely rejected the Christian revelation; but

when the Socinians adopted this notion, without wholly rejecting the Scriptures, it was promptly perceived that the doctrine of an intermediate state, and the materiality of the soul, could not be maintained together;\* and the most violent and disgraceful criticisms and evasions have, therefore, by this class of interpreters been resorted to, in order to save a notion as unphilosophical as it is contrary to the word of God. Nothing can be more satisfactory than the observations of Dr. Campbell on this subject:—

“ Many expressions of Scripture, in the natural and obvious sense, imply that an intermediate and separate state of the soul is actually to succeed death. Such are the words of the Lord to the penitent thief upon the cross, Luke xxiii. 43; Stephen’s dying petition, Acts vii. 59; the comparisons which the Apostle Paul makes in different places, (2 Cor. v. 6, &c., Philip. i. 21,) between the enjoyment which true Christians can attain by their continuance in this world, and that which they enter on at their departure out of it; and several other passages. Let the words referred to be read by any judicious person, either in the original or in the common translation, which is sufficiently exact for this purpose, and let him, setting aside all theory or system, say, candidly, whether they would not be understood, by the gross of mankind, as presupposing that the soul may and will exist separately from the body, and be susceptible of happiness or misery in that state. If any thing could add to the native evidence of the expressions, it would be the unnatural meanings that are put upon them, in order to disguise that evidence. What shall we say of the metaphysical distinction introduced for this purpose between absolute and relative time? The Apostle Paul, they are sensible, speaks of the saints as admitted to enjoyment in the presence of God, immediately after death. Now, to palliate

\* A few Divines, and but few, have also been found, who, still admitting the essential distinction between body and spirit, have thought that their separation by death incapacitated the soul for the exercise of its powers. This suspension they call “the sleep of the soul.” With the materialist death causes the entire annihilation, for the time, of the thinking property of matter. Both opinions are, however, refuted by the same scriptural arguments.

the direct contradiction there is in this to their doctrine, that the vital principle, which is all they mean by the soul, remains extinguished between death and the resurrection, they remind us of the difference there is between absolute or real and relative or apparent time. They admit, that if the Apostle be understood as speaking of real time, what is said flatly contradicts their system ; but, say they, his words must be interpreted as spoken only of apparent time. He talks, indeed, of entering on a state of enjoyment immediately after death, though there may be many thousands of years between the one and the other ; for he means only, that when that state shall commence, however distant in reality the time may be, the person entering upon it will not be sensible of that distance, and, consequently, there will be to him an apparent coincidence with the moment of his death. But does the Apostle any where give a hint that this is his meaning ? Or is it what any man would naturally discover from his words ? That it is exceedingly remote from the common use of language, I believe hardly any of those who favour this scheme will be partial enough to deny. Did the sacred penmen then mean to put a cheat upon the world, and, by the help of an equivocal expression, to flatter men with the hope of entering, the instant they expire, on a state of felicity, when, in fact, they knew that it would be many ages before it would take place ? But were the hypothesis about the extinction of the mind between death and the resurrection well founded, the apparent coincidence they speak of is not so clear as they seem to think it. For my part, I cannot regard it as an axiom, and I never heard of any who attempted to demonstrate it. To me it appears merely a corollary from Mr. Locke's doctrine, which derives our conceptions of time from the succession of our ideas, which, whether true or false, is a doctrine to be found only among certain philosophers, and which, we may reasonably believe, never came into the heads of those to whom the Gospel, in the apostolic age, was announced.

“ I remark that even the curious equivocations (or, perhaps, more properly, mental reservations) that have been devised for them, will not, in every case, save the credit of apostolical



veracity. The words of Paul to the Corinthians are, 'Knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord;' again, 'We are willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.' Could such expressions have been used by him, if he had held it impossible to be with the Lord, or, indeed, any where, without the body; and that, whatever the change was which was made by death, he could not be in the presence of the Lord, till he returned to the body? Absence from the body, and presence with the Lord, were never, therefore, more unfortunately combined than in this illustration. Things are combined here as co-incident, which, on the hypothesis of those gentlemen, are incompatible. If recourse be had to the original, the expressions in Greek are, if possible, still stronger. They are, οἱ ἐνδημῶντες ἐν τῷ σώματι, 'those who dwell in the body,' who are ἐκδημῶντες ἀπὸ τοῦ Κυρίου, 'at a distance from the Lord.' As, on the contrary, they are οἱ ἐκδημῶντες ἐκ τοῦ σώματος, 'those who have travelled out of the body,' who are οἱ ἐνδημῶντες πρὸς τὸν Κύριον, 'those who reside or are present with the Lord.' In the passage to the Philippians, also, the commencement of his presence with the Lord is represented as co-incident, not with his return to the body, but with his leaving it; with the dissolution, not with the restoration, of the union.

"From the tenor of the New Testament, the sacred writers appear to proceed on the supposition that the soul and the body are naturally distinct and separable, and that the soul is susceptible of pain or pleasure in a state of separation. It were endless to enumerate all the places which evince this: The story of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke xvi. 22, 23; the last words of our Lord upon the cross, Luke xxiii. 46, and of Stephen, when dying; Paul's doubts, whether he was in the body or out of the body, when he was translated to the third heaven and paradise, 2 Cor. xii. 2—4; our Lord's words to Thomas, to satisfy him that he was not a spirit, Luke xxiv. 39; and, to conclude, the express mention of the denial of spirits as one of the errors of the Sadducees, Acts xxiii. 8, 'For the Sadducees say there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit,' μηδὲ ἄγγελον, μήτε πνεῦμα: All these are irre-

fragable evidences of the general opinion on this subject of both Jews and Christians. By 'spirit,' as distinguished from 'angel,' is evidently meant the departed spirit of a human being; for, that man is here, before his natural death, possessed of a vital and intelligent principle, which is commonly called his 'soul' or 'spirit,' it was never pretended that they denied."\*

In this intermediate, but felicitous and glorious state, the disembodied spirits of the righteous will remain in joy and felicity with Christ, until the general judgment; when another display of the gracious effects of our redemption by Christ will appear in the glorious resurrection of their bodies to an immortal life; thus distinguishing them from the wicked, whose resurrection will be to "shame and everlasting contempt," or to what may be emphatically termed, "an immortal death."

On this subject no point of discussion, of any importance, arises among those who admit the truth of Scripture, except as to the way in which the doctrine of the resurrection of the body is to be understood;—whether a resurrection of the substance of the body be meant, or of some minute and indestructible part of it. The latter theory has been adopted for the sake of avoiding certain supposed difficulties. It cannot, however, fail to strike every impartial reader of the New Testament, that the doctrine of the resurrection is there taught without any nice distinctions. It is always exhibited as a miraculous work; and represents the same body which is laid in the grave as the subject of this change from death to life, by the power of Christ. Thus, our Lord was raised in the same body in which he died, and his resurrection is constantly held forth as the model of ours; and the Apostle Paul expressly says, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." The only passage of Scripture which appears to favour the notion of the rising of the immortal body from some indestructible germ, is 1 Cor. xv. 35, &c. : "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou

\* Dissertation vi., part 2.

fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die ; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain," &c. If, however, it had been the intention of the Apostle, holding this view of the case, to meet objections to the doctrine of the resurrection, grounded upon the difficulties of conceiving how the same body, in the popular sense, could be raised up in substance, we might have expected him to correct this misapprehension by declaring, that this was not the Christian doctrine ; but that some small parts of the body only, bearing as little proportion to the whole as the germ of a seed to the plant, would be preserved, and be unfolded into the perfected body at the resurrection. Instead of this, he goes on immediately to remind the objector of the differences which exist between material bodies as they now exist ; between the plant and the bare or naked grain ; between one plant and another ; between the flesh of men, of beasts, of fishes, and of birds ; between celestial and terrestrial bodies ; and between the lesser and greater celestial luminaries themselves. Still further: He proceeds to state the difference, not between the germ of the body to be raised, and the body given at the resurrection ; but between the body itself, understood popularly, which dies, and the body which shall be raised. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption," which would not be true of the supposed incorruptible and imperishable germ of this hypothesis ; and can only be affirmed of the body itself, considered in substance, and, in its present state, corruptible. Further : The question put by the objector,—“ How are the dead raised up ? ” does not refer to the *modus agendi* of the resurrection, or the process or manner in which the thing is to be effected, as the advocates of the germ hypothesis appear to assume. This is manifest from the answer of the Apostle, who goes on immediately to state, not in what manner the resurrection is to be effected, but what shall be the state or condition of the resurrection body ; which is no answer at all to the question, if it be taken in that sense.

The first of the two questions in the passage referred to relates to the possibility of the resurrection,—“ How are the dead

raised up?" the second, to the kind of body which they are to take, supposing the fact to be allowed. Both questions, however, imply a denial of the fact, or, at least, express a strong doubt concerning it. It is thus that  $\omega\omega\varsigma$ , "how," in the first question, is taken in many passages where it is connected with a verb;\* and the second question only expresses the general negation

\* Genesis xxxix. 9:  $\Pi\omega\varsigma \pi\omicron\iota\eta\sigma\omega$ ; "How shall I," how is it possible that I should, "do this great wickedness?" "How then can I?" say our translators. Exodus vi. 12: "Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me?"  $\Pi\omega\varsigma \epsilon\iota\sigma\alpha\kappa\omicron\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota \mu\omicron\upsilon \Phi\alpha\rho\alpha\omega$ ; "How is it likely, or possible, that Pharaoh should hear me?" See also verse 30. Judges xvi. 15: "And she said unto him,"  $\Pi\omega\varsigma \lambda\epsilon\gamma\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ , "How canst thou say, I love thee?" 2 Samuel xi. 11, may also be considered in the LXX. 2 Kings x. 4: "But they were exceedingly afraid, and said, Behold, two kings stood not before him:"  $\kappa\alpha\iota \pi\omega\varsigma$ ; "how then shall we stand?" how is it possible that we should stand? Job ix. 2:  $\Pi\omega\varsigma \gamma\alpha\rho \epsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\iota \delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\varsigma \beta\rho\omicron\tau\omicron\varsigma$ ; "For how shall mortal man be just with, or in the presence of, God?" how is it possible? See what follows. Psalm lxxii. (lxxiii.) 11:  $\Pi\omega\varsigma \epsilon\gamma\nu\omega \omicron \Theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ ; "How doth God know?" how is it possible that he should know? See the connexion. Jer. viii. 8:  $\Pi\omega\varsigma \epsilon\rho\epsilon\iota\tau\epsilon$ ; "How do ye say?" how is it that ye say,—how can ye say, "We are wise?" Ibid. xxix. 7: (xlvi. 7:)  $\Pi\omega\varsigma \eta\sigma\upsilon\chi\alpha\sigma\epsilon\iota$ ; "How can it," the sword of the Lord, "be quiet?" Ezekiel xxxiii. 10: "If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them,"  $\pi\omega\varsigma \xi\eta\sigma\omicron\mu\epsilon\theta\alpha$ ; "how should we then live?" Matt. vii. 4: "Or how,"  $\pi\omega\varsigma$ , "wilt thou say to thy brother?" where Rosenmüller observes that  $\pi\omega\varsigma$  has the power of negation. Ibid. xii. 26: "If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself:"  $\pi\omega\varsigma \omicron\upsilon\nu \sigma\tau\alpha\theta\eta\sigma\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$ ; "how shall then," how can then, "his kingdom stand?" See also Luke xi. 18. Matt. xxiii. 33: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers,"  $\pi\omega\varsigma \phi\upsilon\gamma\eta\tau\epsilon$ , "how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" *qui fieri potest?* ROSEN. Mark iv. 40:  $\Pi\omega\varsigma \omicron\upsilon\kappa \epsilon\chi\epsilon\tau\epsilon \pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\nu$ ; "How is it that ye have no faith?" Luke i. 34, may also be adduced. John v. 47: "If ye believe not his writings,"  $\pi\omega\varsigma \pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\tau\epsilon$ ; "how shall ye," how can ye, "believe my words?" Romans iii. 6: "God forbid: For then,"  $\pi\omega\varsigma \kappa\rho\iota\nu\epsilon\iota$ ; "how shall God judge the world?" how is it possible? See the preceding verse. Ibid. viii. 32:  $\Pi\omega\varsigma \chi\alpha\rho\iota\sigma\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$ ; "How shall he not," how is it possible but that he should, "with him also freely give us all things?" Ibid. x. 14:  $\Pi\omega\varsigma$ — $\epsilon\pi\iota\kappa\alpha\lambda\epsilon\sigma\omicron\upsilon\nu\tau\alpha\iota$ ; "How then shall they," how is it possible that they should, "call on him in whom they have not believed?" &c. 1 Tim. iii. 5: "For if a man know not how to rule his own house,"  $\pi\omega\varsigma$ , "how shall he take care of the church of God?" Heb. ii. 3: "How shall we escape," how is it possible that we should escape, "if we neglect so great salvation?" 1 John iii. 17:  $\Pi\omega\varsigma$ , "How dwelleth the love of God in him?" how can it dwell? Compare chap. iv. 20, where  $\delta\upsilon\nu\alpha\tau\alpha\iota$  is added.

or doubt more particularly, by implying, that the objector could not conceive of any kind of body being restored to man, which would not be an evil and imperfection to him. For the very reason why some of the Christians of that age denied, or strongly doubted, the resurrection of the body; explaining it figuratively, and saying that it was past already; was, that they were influenced to this by the notion of their philosophical schools, that the body was the prison of the soul, and that the greatest deliverance men could experience was to be eternally freed from their connexion with matter. Hence the early philosophising sects in the Christian church, the Gnostics, Marcionites, &c., denied the resurrection, on the same ground as the philosophers, and thought it opposed to that perfection which they hoped to enjoy in another world. Such persons appear to have been in the church of Corinth as early as the time of St. Paul; for that in this chapter he answers the objections, not of pagans, but of professing Christians, appears from chap. xv. 12: "How say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead?" The objection, therefore, in the minds of these persons to the doctrine of the resurrection, did not lie against the doctrine of the raising up of the substance of the same body, so that, provided this notion could be dispensed with, they were prepared to admit, that a new material body might spring from its germ, as a plant from seed. They stumbled at the doctrine in every form, because it involved the circumstance of the re-union of the spirit with matter, which they thought an evil. When, therefore, the objector asks, "How are the dead raised up?"\* he is to be understood, not as inquiring as to the process, but as to the possibility. The doubt may, indeed, be taken as an implied negation of the possibility of the resurrection with reference to God; and then the Apostle, by referring to the springing up of the grain of corn, when dissolved and putrified, may be understood to show that the event was not inconceivable, by referring to God's omnipotence, as shown in his daily providence, which, *à priori*, would appear as marvellous and

\* The present indicative verb is here used, as it is generally throughout this chapter, for the future.

incredible. But it is much more probable, that the impossibility implied in this question refers, not to the power of God, which every Christian in the church at Corinth must be supposed to have been taught to conceive of as almighty, and therefore adequate to the production of this effect ; but as relating to the contrariety which was assumed to exist between the doctrine of the re-union of the soul with the body, and those hopes of a higher condition in a future life, which both reason and revelation taught them to form. The second question, “ With what body do they come ? ” like the former, is a question not of inquiry, but of denial, or, at least, of strong doubt, importing, that no idea could be entertained by the objector of any material body being made the residence of a disenthralled spirit, which could comport with those notions of deliverance from the bondage of corruption by death, which the philosophy of the age had taught, and which Christianity itself did not discountenance. The questions, though different, come, therefore, nearly to the same import ; and this explains why the Apostle chiefly dwells upon the answer to the latter only, by which, in fact, he replies to both. The grain cast into the earth even dies and is corrupted ; and that which is sown is not “ the body which shall be,” in form and quality, but naked grain ; yet into the plant, in its perfect form, is the same matter transformed. So the flesh of beasts, birds, fishes, and man, is the same matter, though exhibiting different qualities. So also bodies celestial are of the same matter as “ bodies terrestrial ; ” and the more splendid luminaries of the heavens are, in substance, the same as those of inferior glory. It is thus that the Apostle reaches his conclusion, and shows, that the doctrine of our re-union with the body implies in it no imperfection,—nothing contrary to the hopes of liberation from the burden of this flesh ; because of the high and glorified qualities which God is able to give to matter ; of which the superior purity, splendour, and energy of some material things in this world, in comparison of others, is a visible demonstration. For, after he has given these instances, he adds : “ So is the resurrection of the dead ; it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption ; it is sown

in dishonour, it is raised in glory ; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power ; it is sown a natural " (an animal) " body, it is raised a spiritual body ;" so called, " as being accommodated to a spirit, and far excelling all that is required for the transaction of earthly and terrene affairs ;" \* and so intent is the Apostle on dissipating all those gross representations of the resurrection of the body which the objectors had assumed as the ground of their opposition, and which they had, probably, in their disputations, placed under the strongest views, that he guards the true Christian doctrine, on this point, in the most explicit manner : " Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption ;" and therefore let no man henceforward affirm, or assume it in his argument, that we teach any such doctrine. This, also, he strengthens by showing, that as to the saints who are alive at the second coming of Christ, they also shall be in like manner changed, and that " this corruptible," as to them also, " shall put on incorruption."

Thus, in the argument, the Apostle confines himself wholly to the possibility of the resurrection of the body in a refined and glorified state ; but omits all reference to the mode in which the thing will be effected, as being out of the line of the objector's questions, and in itself above human thought, and wholly miraculous. It is, however, clear, that when he speaks of the body, as the subject of this wondrous change, he speaks of it popularly, as the same body in substance, whatever changes in its qualities or figure may be impressed upon it. Great general changes it will experience, as from corruption to incorruption, from mortality to immortality ; great changes of a particular kind will also take place, as its being freed from deformities and defects, and the accidental varieties produced by climate, aliments, labour, and hereditary diseases. It is also laid down by our Lord, that " in the resurrection they shall neither marry nor be given in marriage, but be like to the angels of God ;" and this also implies a certain change of structure ; and we may gather from the declaration of the

\* Rosenmüller.

Apostle, that though "the stomach" is now adapted "to meats, and meats to the stomach," God will "destroy both it and them;" that the animal appetite for food will be removed, and the organ now adapted to that appetite will have no place in the renewed frame. But great as these changes are, the human form will be retained in its perfection, after the model of our Lord's glorious body, and the substance of the matter of which it is composed will not thereby be affected. That the same body which was laid in the grave shall arise out of it, is the manifest doctrine of the Scriptures.

The notion of an incorruptible germ, or that of an original and unchangeable *stamen*, out of which a new and glorious body, at the resurrection, is to spring, appears to have been borrowed from the speculations of some of the Jewish Rabbins, who speak of some such supposed part in the human frame, under the name *lux*, to which they ascribe marvellous properties, and from which the body was to arise. No allusion is, however, made to any such opinion by the early Fathers, in their defences of the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead. On the contrary, they argue in such a way, as to prove the possibility of the re-union of the scattered parts of the body; which sufficiently shows that the germ theory had not been resorted to, by Christian Divines at least, in order to harmonize the doctrine of the resurrection with philosophy. So Justin Martyr, in a fragment of his concerning the resurrection, expressly answers the objection, that it is impossible for the flesh, after a corruption and perfect dissolution of all its parts, to be united together again; and contends, "that if the body be not raised complete, with all its integral parts, it would argue a want of power in God." And although some of the Jews adopted the notion of the germinating or springing up of the body from some one indestructible part, yet the most orthodox of their Rabbies contended for the resurrection of the same body. So Maimonides says, "Men, in the same manner as they before lived, with the same body, shall be restored to life by God, and sent into this life with the same identity;" and "that nothing can properly be called a resurrection of the dead, but the return of the



very same soul into the very same body from which it was separated." \*

This theory, under its various forms, and whether adopted by Jews or Christians, was designed, doubtless, to render the doctrine of a resurrection from the dead less difficult to conceive, and more acceptable to philosophic minds; but, like most other attempts of the same kind to bring down the supernatural doctrines of revelation to the level of our conceptions, it escapes none of the original difficulties, and involves itself in others far more perplexing.

For if by this hypothesis it was designed to remove the difficulty of conceiving how the scattered parts of one body could be preserved from becoming integral parts of other bodies, it supposes that the constant care of Providence is exerted to maintain the incorruptibility of those individual germs, or stamina, so as to prevent their assimilation with each other. Now, if they have this by original quality, then the same quality may just as easily be supposed to appertain to every particle which composes a human body; so that, though it be used for food, it shall not be capable of assimilation, in any circumstances, with another human body. But if these germs, or stamina, have not this quality by their original nature, they can only be prevented from assimilating with each other by that operation of God which is present to all his works, and which must always be directed to secure the execution of his own ultimate designs. If this view be adopted, then, if the resort must at last be to the superintendence of a Being of infinite power and wisdom, there is no greater difficulty in supposing that his care to secure this object shall extend to a million than to a thousand particles of matter. This is, in fact, the true and rational answer to the objection that the same piece of matter may happen to be a part of two or more bodies, as in the instances of men feeding upon animals which have fed upon men, and of men feeding upon one another. The question here is one which simply respects the frustrating a final purpose of the Almighty by an operation of

\* *Rambam apud Pocockium in Notis Miscellan. Port. Mos.*, p. 125.

nature. To suppose that he cannot prevent this, is to deny his power; to suppose him inattentive to it, is to suppose him indifferent to his own designs; and to assume that he employs care to prevent it, is to assume nothing greater, nothing in fact so great, as many instances of control which are always occurring; as, for instance, the regulation of the proportion of the sexes in human births, which cannot be attributed to chance, but must either be referred to superintendence or to some original law.

Thus these theories afford no relief to the only real difficulty involved in the doctrine, but leave the whole case still to be resolved into the almighty power of God. But they involve themselves in the fatal objection, that they are plainly in opposition to the doctrine of the Scriptures. For,

1. There is no resurrection of the body on this hypothesis, because the germ, or stamina, can in no good sense be called "the body." If a finger, or even a limb, is not the body, much less can these minuter parts be entitled to this appellation.

2. There is, on these theories, no resurrection at all. For if the preserved part be a germ, and the analogy of germination be adopted, then we have no longer a resurrection from death, but a vegetation from a suspended principle of secret life. If the stamina of Leibnitz be contended for, then the body, into which the soul enters at the resurrection, with the exception of these minute stamina, is provided for it by the addition and aggregation of new matter, and we have a creation, not a resurrection.

3. If bodies, in either of these modes, are to be framed for the soul, by the addition of a large mass of new matter, the resurrection is made substantially the same with the pagan notion of the metempsychosis; and if St. Paul, at Athens, preached, not "Jesus and the resurrection," but Jesus and a transmigration into a new body, it will be difficult to account for his hearers scoffing at a doctrine which had received the sanction of several of their own philosophic authorities.

Another objection to the resurrection of the body has been drawn from the changes of its substance during life. The

answer to this is, that allowing a frequent and total change of the substance of the body (which, however, is but an hypothesis) to take place, it affects not the doctrine of Scripture, which is, that the body which is laid in the grave shall be raised up. But then, we are told, that if our bodies have in fact undergone successive changes during life, the bodies in which we have sinned or performed rewardable actions may not be, in many instances, the same bodies as those which will be actually rewarded or punished. We answer, that rewards and punishments have their relation to the body, not so much as it is the subject but the instrument of reward and punishment. It is the soul only which perceives pain or pleasure, which suffers or enjoys, and is, therefore, the only rewardable subject. Were we, therefore, to admit such corporeal mutations as are assumed in this objection, they affect not the case of our accountability. The personal identity or sameness of a rational being, as Mr. Locke has observed, consists in self-consciousness: "By this every one is to himself what he calls 'self,' without considering whether that self be continued in the same or divers substances. It was by the same self which reflects on an action done many years ago, that the action was performed." If there were, indeed, any weight in this objection, it would affect the proceedings of human criminal courts in all cases of offences committed at some distance of time; but it contradicts the common sense, because it contradicts the common consciousness and experience, of mankind.

## PART THIRD.

### THE MORALS OF CHRISTIANITY.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### *The Moral Law.*

OF the law of God, as the subject of a divine and adequately-authenticated revelation, some observations were made in the first part of this work. That such a law exists, so communicated to mankind, and contained in the holy Scriptures ;—that we are under obligation to obey it as the declared will of our Creator and Lord ;—that this obligation is grounded upon our natural relation to him as creatures made by his power, and dependent upon his bounty, are points which need not, therefore, be again adverted to. Nor is it necessary to dwell upon the circumstances and degrees of its manifestation to men, under those former dispensations of the true religion which preceded Christianity. We have exhibited the leading doctrines of the Scriptures, as they are found in that perfected system of revealed religion which we owe to our Saviour, and to his Apostles, who wrote under the inspiration of that Holy Spirit whom he sent forth “ to lead them into all truth ;” and we shall now find in the discourses of our Lord, and in the apostolical writings, a system of moral principles, virtues, and duties, equalling in fulness and perfection that great body of doctrinal truth which is contained in the New Testament, and deriving from it its vital influence and efficacy.

It is, however, to be noticed, that the morals of the New Testament are not proposed to us in the form of a regular

code. Even in the books of Moses, which have the legislative form to a great extent, all the principles and duties which constituted the full character of godliness, under that dispensation, are not made the subjects of formal injunction by particular precepts. They are partly infolded in general principles, or often take the form of injunction in an apparently incidental manner, or are matters of obvious inference. A preceding code of traditionary moral law is also all along supposed in the writings of Moses and the Prophets, as well as a consuetudinary ritual and a doctrinal theology, both transmitted from the Patriarchs. This, too, is eminently the case with Christianity. It supposes that all who believed in Christ admitted the divine authority of the Old Testament ; and it assumes the perpetual authority of its morals, as well as the truth of its fundamental theology. The constant allusions in the New Testament to the moral rules of the Jews and Patriarchs, either expressly as precepts, or as the data of argument, sufficiently guard us against the notion, that what has not in so many words been re-enacted by Christ and his Apostles is of no authority among Christians. In a great number of instances, however, the form is directly preceptive, so as to have all the explicitness and force of a regular code of law, and is, as much as a regular code could be, a declaration of the sovereign will of Christ, enforced by the sanctions of eternal life and death.

This, however, is a point on which a few confirmatory observations may be usefully adduced.

No part of the preceding dispensation, designated generally by the appellation of “ the law,” is repealed in the New Testament, but what is obviously ceremonial, typical, and incapable of co-existing with Christianity. Our Lord, in his discourse with the Samaritan woman, declares, that the hour of the abolition of the temple worship was come ; the Apostle Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, teaches us that the Levitical services were but shadows, the substance and end of which is Christ ; and the ancient visible church, as constituted upon the ground of natural descent from Abraham, was abolished by the establishment of a spiritual body of believers to take its place.

No precepts of a purely political nature, that is, which respect the civil subjection of the Jews to their theocracy, are, therefore, of any force to us as laws, although they may have, in many cases, the greatest authority as principles. No ceremonial precepts can be binding, since they were restrained to a period terminating with the death and resurrection of Christ; nor are even the patriarchal rites of circumcision and the passover obligatory upon Christians, since we have sufficient evidence, that they were of an adumbrative character, and were laid aside by the first inspired teachers of Christianity.

With the moral precepts which abound in the Old Testament the case is very different, as sufficiently appears from the different and even contrary manner in which they are always spoken of by Christ and his Apostles. When our Lord, in his sermon on the mount, says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the Prophets; I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil;" that is, to confirm or establish it;—the entire scope of his discourse shows that he is speaking exclusively of the moral precepts of the law, eminently so called, and of the moral injunctions of the Prophets founded upon them, and to which he thus gives an equal authority. And in so solemn a manner does he enforce this, that he adds, doubtless as foreseeing that attempts would be made by deceiving or deceived men professing his religion to lessen the authority of the moral law, "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven;" that is, as St. Chrysostom interprets, "He shall be the farthest from attaining heaven and happiness, which imports that he shall not attain it at all."

In like manner St. Paul, after having strenuously maintained the doctrine of justification by faith alone, anticipates an objection by asking, "Do we then make void the law through faith?" and subjoins, "God forbid: Yea, we establish the law;" meaning by "the law," as the context and his argument show, the moral and not the ceremonial law.

After such declarations it is worse than trifling for any to

contend that, in order to establish the authority of the moral law of the Jews over Christians, it ought to have been formally re-enacted. To this we may, however, further reply, not only that many important moral principles and rules found in the Old Testament were never formally enacted among the Jews, were traditional from an earlier age, and received at different times the more indirect authority of inspired recognition; but, to put the matter in a stronger light, that all the leading moral precepts of the Jewish Scriptures are, in point of fact, proposed in a manner which has the full force of formal re-enactment, as the laws of the Christian church. This argument, from the want of formal re-enactment, has therefore no weight. The summary of the law and the Prophets, which is to love God with all our heart, and to serve him with all our strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, is unquestionably enjoined, and even re-enacted, by the Christian Lawgiver. When our Lord is explicitly asked by "one who came unto him and said, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" the answer given shows that the moral law contained in the Decalogue is so in force under the Christian dispensation, that obedience to it is necessary to final salvation: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." And that nothing ceremonial is intended by this term, is manifest from what follows: "He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal," &c. (Matt. xix. 17—19.) Here, also, we have all the force of a formal re-enactment of the Decalogue, a part of it being evidently put for the whole. Nor were it difficult to produce passages from the discourses of Christ and the writings of the Apostles, which enjoin all the precepts of this law taken separately, by their authority, as indispensable parts of Christian duty, and that, too, under their original sanctions of life and death; so that the two circumstances which form the true character of a law in its highest sense,—divine authority and penal sanctions,—are found as truly in the New Testament as in the Old. It will not, for instance, be contended, that the New Testament does not enjoin the acknowledgment and worship of one God alone; nor

that it does not prohibit idolatry ; nor that it does not level its maledictions against false and profane swearing ; nor that the Apostle Paul does not use the very words of the fifth commandment preceptively, when he says, “ Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise ;” (Eph. vi. 2 ;) nor that murder, adultery, theft, false witness, and covetousness, are not all prohibited under pain of exclusion from the kingdom of God. Thus, then, we have the whole Decalogue brought into the Christian code of morals by a distinct injunction of its separate precepts, and by their recognition as of permanent and unchangeable obligation ; the fourth commandment, respecting the Sabbath only, being so far excepted, that its injunction is not so expressly marked. This, however, is no exception in fact ; for besides that its original place in the two tables sufficiently distinguishes it from all positive ceremonial and typical precepts, and gives it a moral character, in respect of its ends,—which are, first, mercy to servants and cattle, and, second, the worship of Almighty God, undisturbed by worldly interruptions and cares,—it is necessarily included in that law which our Lord declares he came not to destroy, or abrogate ; in that law which St. Paul declares to be established by faith, and among those commandments which our Lord declares must be kept, if any one would enter into life. To this, also, the practice of the Apostles is to be added, who did not cease themselves from keeping one day in seven holy, nor teach others so to do ; but gave to “ the Lord’s day ” that eminence and sanctity in the Christian church which the seventh day had in the Jewish, by consecrating it to holy uses ; an alteration not affecting the precept at all, except in an unessential circumstance, (if indeed in that,) and in which we may suppose them to act under divine suggestion.

Thus, then, we have the obligation of the whole Decalogue as fully established in the New Testament as in the Old, as if it had been formally re-enacted ; and that no formal re-enactment of it took place, is itself a presumptive proof that it was never regarded by the Lawgiver as temporary, which the formality of republication might have supposed.

It is important to remark, however, that, although the moral



laws of the Mosaic dispensation pass into the Christian code, they stand there in other and higher circumstances ; so that the New Testament is a more perfect dispensation of the knowledge of the moral will of God than the Old. In particular,

1. They are more expressly extended to the heart, as by our Lord in his sermon on the mount ; who teaches us that the thought and inward purpose of any offence is a violation of the law prohibiting its external and visible commission.

2. The principles on which they are founded are carried out in the New Testament into a greater variety of duties, which, by embracing more perfectly the social and civil relations of life, are of a more universal character.

3. There is a much more enlarged injunction of positive and particular virtues, especially those which constitute the Christian temper.

4. By all overt acts being inseparably connected with corresponding principles in the heart, in order to constitute acceptable obedience, which principles suppose the regeneration of the soul by the Holy Ghost. This moral renovation is, therefore, held out as necessary to our salvation, and promised as a part of the grace of our redemption by Christ.

5. By being connected with promises of divine assistance, which is peculiar to a law connected with evangelical provisions.

6. By their having a living illustration in the perfect and practical example of Christ.

7 By the higher sanctions derived from the clearer revelation of a future state, and the more explicit promises of eternal life, and threatenings of eternal punishment.

It follows from this, that we have in the Gospel the most complete and perfect revelation of moral law ever given to men ; and a more exact manifestation of the brightness, perfection, and glory of that law, under which angels and our progenitors in Paradise were placed, and which it is at once the delight and interest of the most perfect and happy beings to obey.

It has, however, fared with morals as with doctrines, that

they have been often, and by a strange perversity, studied without any reference to the authority of the Scriptures. As we have had systems of natural religion drawn out of the materials furnished by the Scriptures, and then placed to the sole account of human reason ; so we have also various systems of morals drawn, as far as the authors thought fit, from the same source, and put forth under the title of “moral philosophy,” implying too often, or at least sanctioning the inference, that the unassisted powers of man are equally adequate to the discovery of doctrine and duty ; or, at best, that Christianity but perfects what uninspired man is able not only to commence, but to carry onward to a considerable approach to perfection. This observation may be made as to both,—that whatever is found correct in doctrine, and pure in morals, in ancient writers or systems, may be traced to indirect revelation ; and that so far as mere reason has applied itself to discovery in either, it has generally gone astray. The modern systems of natural religion and ethics are superior to the ancient, not because the reason of their framers is superior, but because they have had the advantage of a light from Christianity, which they have not been candid enough generally to acknowledge. For those who have written on such subjects with a view to lower the value of the holy Scriptures, the remarks in the first part of this work must suffice ; but of that class of moral philosophers who hold the authority of the sacred books, and yet sedulously omit all reference to them, it may be inquired what they propose, by disjoining morals from Christianity, and considering them as a separate science ? Authority they cannot gain, for no obligation to duty can be so high as the command of God ; nor can that authority be applied in so direct a manner, as by a revelation of his will ; and as for the perfection of their system, since they discover no duties not already enjoined in the Scriptures, or grounded upon some general principles they contain, they can find no apology, from the additions they make to our moral knowledge, to put Christianity, on all such subjects, wholly out of sight.

All attempts to teach morals, independent of Christianity,

even by those who receive it as a divine revelation, must, notwithstanding the great names which have sanctioned the practice, be considered as of mischievous tendency, although the design may have been laudable, and the labour, in some subordinate respects, not without utility.

1. Because they silently convey the impression, that human reason, without assistance, is sufficient to discover the full duty of man towards God and towards his fellow-creatures.

2. Because they imply a deficiency in the moral code of our religion, which does not exist; the fact being that, although these systems borrow much from Christianity, they do not take in the whole of its moral principles, and, therefore, so far as they are accepted as substitutes, displace what is perfect for what is imperfect.

3. Because they turn the attention from what is fact, the revealed law of God, with its appropriate sanctions, and place the obligation to obedience either on fitness, beauty, general interest, or the natural authority of truth, which are all matters of opinion; or, if they ultimately refer it to the will of God, yet they infer that will through various reasonings and speculations, which in themselves are still matters of opinion, and as to which men will feel themselves to be in some degree free.

4. The duties they enjoin are either merely outward in the act, and so they disconnect them from internal principles and habits, without which they are not acceptable to God, and but the shadows of real virtue, however beneficial they may be to men; or else they assume that human nature is able to engraft those principles and habits upon itself, and to practise them without abatement and interruption,—a notion which is contradicted by those very Scriptures they hold to be of divine authority.

5. Their separation of the doctrines of religion from its morals, leads to an entirely different process of promoting morality among men from that which the infinite wisdom and goodness of God has established in the Gospel. They lay down the rule of conduct, and recommend it from its excellence *per se*, or its influence upon individuals and upon society, or perhaps because it is manifested to be the will of the supreme

Being, indicated from the constitution of human nature, and the relations of men. But Christianity rigidly connects its doctrines with its morals. Its doctrine of man's moral weakness is made use of to lead him to distrust his own sufficiency ; its doctrine of the atonement shows at once the infinite evil of sin, and encourages men to seek deliverance from its power. Its doctrine of regeneration by the influence of the Holy Spirit implies the entire destruction of the love of evil, and the direction of the whole affection of the soul to universal virtue. Its doctrine of prayer opens to man a fellowship with God, invigorating to every virtue. The example of Christ, the imitation of which is made obligatory upon us, is in itself a moral system in action, and in principle ; and the revelation of a future judgment brings the whole weight of the control of future rewards and punishments to bear upon the motives and actions of men, and is the source of that fear of offending God which is the constant guard of virtue, when human motives would in a multitude of cases avail nothing.

It may, indeed, be asked, whether the teaching of morals must then in all cases be kept in connexion with religion ; and whether the philosophy of virtues and of vices, with the lower motives by which they are urged upon men, may not be usefully investigated. We answer, that if the end proposed by this is not altogether speculative, but something practical ; if the case of an immoral world is taken up by moralists with reference to its cure, or even to its emendation in any effectual degree, the whole is then resolved into this simple question,—whether a weaker instrument shall be preferred to that which is powerful and effective. Certain it is that the great end of Christianity, so far as its influence upon society goes, is to moralize mankind ; but its infinitely wise Author has established and authorized but one process for the correction of the practical evils of the world, and that is, the teaching and enforcement of the whole truth as it stands in his own revelations ; and to this only has he promised his special blessing. A distinct class of ethical teachers, imitating heathen philosophers in the principles and modes of moral tuition, is, in a Christian country, a violent anomaly ; and implies an absurd

return to the twilight of knowledge after the sun itself has arisen upon the world.

Within proper guards, and in strict connexion with the whole Christian system, what is called "moral philosophy" is not, however, to be undervalued; and from many of the writers above alluded to much useful instruction may be collected, which, though of but little efficacy in itself, may be invigorated by uniting it with the vital and energetic doctrines of religion, and may thus become directive to the conduct of the serious Christian. Understanding then by moral philosophy, not that pride of science which borrows the discoveries of the Scriptures and then exhibits itself as their rival, or affects to supply their deficiencies; but as a modest scrutiny into the reasons on which the moral precepts of revelation may be grounded, and a wise and honest application of its moral principles to particular cases, it is a branch of science which may be usefully cultivated in connexion with Christianity.

With respect to the reasons on which moral precepts rest, we may make a remark similar to that offered in a former part of this work, on the doctrines of revelation. Some of those doctrines rest wholly on the authority of the Revealer; others are accompanied with a manifest rational evidence; and a third class may partially disclose their rationale to the patient and pious inquirer. Yet the authority of each class as a subject of faith is the same; it rests upon the character of God and his relations to us; and that doctrine which is enjoined on our faith without other rational evidence than that which proves it to be a part of a revelation from heaven, is equally binding with that which exercises and delights our rational faculties, by a disclosure of the internal evidence of its truth. When God has permitted us to turn aside to see some great sight of manifested wisdom, we are to obey the invitation; but still we are always to remember that the authority of a revealed truth stands on infinitely higher ground than our perception of its reasonableness.

So also as to the moral precepts of the Bible, the rational evidence is afforded in different degrees, and it is both allowable and laudable in us to investigate and collect it; but still

with this caution, that the authority of such injunctions is not to be regulated by our perception of their reasons, although the reasons, when apparent, may be piously applied to commend the authority. The discoveries we may make of fitness or any other quality in a precept cannot be the highest reason of our obedience ; but it may be a reason for obeying with accelerated alacrity. The obligation of the Sabbath would be the same were no obvious reasons of mercy and piety connected with it ; but the influence of the precept upon our interests and that of the community commends the precept to our affections as well as to our sense of duty.

With respect to the application of general precepts, that practical wisdom which is the result of large and comprehensive observation has an important office. The precepts of a universal revelation must necessarily be, for the most part, general ; because if rules had been given for each case in detail, then truly, as St. John observes, “ the world could not have contained the books written.” The application of these general principles to that variety of cases which arises in human affairs, is the work of the Christian preacher, and the Christian moralist. Where there is honesty of mind, ordinarily there can be no difficulty in this ; and in cases which involve some difficulty, when the interpretation of the law is made, as it always ought, to favour the rule,—and when, in doubtful cases, the safer course is adopted,—such is the explicit character of the general principles of the holy Scriptures, that no one can go astray. The moral philosophy which treats of exceptions to general rules, is always to be watched with jealousy ; and ought to be shunned when it presumes to form rules out of supposed exceptions. This is affecting to be wiser than the Lawgiver ; and such philosophy assumes an authority in the control of human conduct to which it has no title ; and steps in between individuals and their consciences in cases where Almighty God himself has not chosen to relieve them ; and where they are specially left, as all sometimes are, to Him with whom they have to do, without the intervention of any third party. Systems of casuistry and cases of conscience have happily gone into general disuse. That they have done more harm upon

the whole than good, and defiled more consciences than they have relieved, cannot be doubted by any one who has largely examined them. They have passed away just in proportion as the Scriptures themselves have been circulated through society, and as that preaching has been most prevalent which enforces the doctrine of supreme love to God and our neighbour, as the sum of the law and of the Gospel. They most abounded in the Romish Church, as best befitting its systems of darkness and delusion ;\* and though works of this kind are found among Protestants in a better form, they have gradually and happily fallen into neglect.

A few words may here be offered on what has been termed, “the ground of moral obligation.”

Some writers have placed this in “the eternal and necessary fitness of things ;” which leaves the matter open to the varying conclusions which different individuals may draw, as to this eternal and necessary fitness ; and, still further, leaves that very natural question quite unanswered,—Why is any one obliged to act according to the fitness of things ?

Others have referred to a supposed original perception of what is right and wrong ; a kind of fixed and permanent and unalterable moral sense, by which the qualities of actions are at once determined ; and from the supposed universal existence of this perception, they have argued the obligation to act accordingly. This scheme, which seems to confound that in human nature to which an appeal may be made when the understanding is enlightened by real truth, with a discriminating and directive principle acting independently of instruction, is also unsatisfactory. For the moral sense is, in fact, found under the control of ignorance and error ; nor does it possess a sensitiveness in all cases in proportion to the truth received into the understanding. The worst crimes have often been committed with a conviction of their being right, as in the case of religious persecutions ; and the absence of the habit of attending to the quality of our actions often renders the abstract truth laid up in the understanding useless, as to its

\* M. le Feore, preceptor of Louis XIII., not unaptly called casuistry, “the art of quibbling with God.”

influence upon the conscience. But if all that is said of this moral sense were true, still it would not establish the principle of obligation. That supposes superior authority ; and should we allow the moral sense to act uniformly, still how is the obligation to perform what it approves to be demonstrated, unless some higher consideration be added to the case ?

More modern moralists have taken the tendency of any course of action to produce the greatest good upon the whole, as the source of moral obligation ; and with this they often connect the will of God, of which they consider this general tendency to be the manifestation. It were better, surely, to refer at once to the will of God as revealed by himself, without encumbering the subject with the circuitous and, at best, doubtful process of first considering what is good upon the whole, and then inferring that this must needs be the will of a wise and benevolent Being. The objection, too, holds in this case, that this theory leaves it still a mere matter of opinion, in which an interested party is to be the judge, whether an action be upon the whole good ; and gives a rule which would be with difficulty applied to some cases, and is scarcely at all applicable to many others which may be supposed.

The only satisfactory answer which the question, as to the source of moral obligation, can receive, is, that it is found in the will of God. For, since the question respects the duty of a created being with reference to his Creator, nothing can be more conclusive than that the Creator has an absolute right to the obedience of his creatures ; and that the creature is in duty obliged to obey Him from whom it not only has received being, but by whom that being is constantly sustained. It has, indeed, been said, that even if it be admitted that I am obliged to obey the will of God, the question is still open, “ Why am I obliged to obey his will ? ” and that this brings us round to the former answer, “ Because he can only will what is upon the whole best for his creatures.” But this is confounding that which may be, and doubtless is, a rule to God in the commands which he issues, with that which really obliges the creature. Now, that which in truth obliges the creature is not the nature of the commands issued by God ; but the relation



in which the creature itself stands to God. If a creature can have no existence, nor any power or faculty, independently of God, it can have no right to employ its faculties independently of him ; and if it have no right to employ its faculties in an independent manner, the right to rule its conduct must rest with the Creator alone ; and from this results the obligation of the creature to obey.

Such is the principle assumed in the Scriptures, where the creative and rectoral relations of God are inseparably united, and the obligation of obedience is made to follow upon the fact of our existence ; and if the will of God, as the source of obligation, be so obvious a rule, the only remaining question is, whether we shall receive that will as it is expressly revealed by himself ; or, wilfully forgetting that such a revelation has been made, we shall proceed to infer it by various processes of induction ? The answer to this might have been safely left to the common sense of mankind, had not the vanity of philosophizing so often interposed to perplex so plain a point.

We must not here confound the will of God as the source of moral obligation, with the notion that right and wrong have no existence but as they are so constituted by the will of God. They must have their foundation in the reality of things. What moral rectitude is, and why it obliges, are quite distinct questions. It is to the latter only that the preceding observations apply. As to the former, the following remarks, from a recent intelligent publication, are very satisfactory :—

“ Virtue, as it regards man, is the conformity or harmony of his affections and actions with the various relations in which he has been placed,—of which conformity the perfect intellect of God, guided in its exercise by his infinitely holy nature, is the only infallible judge.

“ We sustain various relations to God himself. He is our Creator, our Preserver, our Benefactor, our Governor. He is the Framer of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits. He sustains us ‘by the word of his power ;’ for, as we are necessarily dependent beings, our continued existence is a kind of prolonged creation. We owe all that we possess to Him ;

and our future blessings must flow from his kindness. Now there are obviously certain affections and actions which harmonize or correspond with these relations. To love and obey God manifestly befit our relation to him, as that great Being from whom our existence as well as all our comforts flow. He who showers his blessings upon us ought to possess our affections ; he who formed us has a right to our obedience. It is not stated merely, let it be observed, that it is impossible to contemplate our relation to God without perceiving that we are morally bound to love and obey him ; (though that is a truth of great importance ; ) for I do not consent to the propriety of the representation, that virtue depends either upon our perceptions or our feelings. There is a real harmony between the relations in which we stand to God, and the feelings and conduct to which reference has been made ; and therefore the human mind has been formed capable of perceiving and feeling it.

“ We sustain various relations to each other. God has formed ‘ of one blood all the families of the earth.’ Mutual love and brotherly kindness, the fruit of love, are required by this relation,—they harmonize or correspond with it. We are children ; we are loved, and guarded, and supported, and tended with unwearied assiduity by our parents. Filial affection and filial obedience are demanded by this relation ; no other state of mind, no other conduct, will harmonize with it. We are, perhaps, on the other hand, parents. Instrumentally at least we have imparted existence to our children ; they depend on us for protection, support, &c. ; and to render that support, is required by the relation we bear to them. It is, however, needless to specify the various relations in which we stand to each other. With reference to all, I again say, that they necessarily involve obligations to certain states of mind, and certain modes of conduct, as harmonizing with the relations ; and that rectitude is the conformity of the character and conduct of an individual with the relations in which he stands to the beings by whom he is surrounded.

“ It is by no means certain to me, that this harmony between the actions and the relations of a moral agent, is not what we

are to understand by that ‘conformity to the fitness of things,’ in which some writers have made the essence of virtue to consist. Against this doctrine, it has been objected, that it is indefinite, if not absurd; because, as it is alleged, it represents an action as right and fit, without stating what it is fit for,—an absurdity as great, says the objector, as it would be to say that ‘the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal,’ without adding, ‘to one another,’ or to any other angle. Dr. Brown also, in arguing against this doctrine, says, ‘There must be a principle of moral regard, independent of reason, or reason may in vain see a thousand fitnesses, and a thousand truths; and would be warmed with the same lively emotions of indignation against an inaccurate time-piece or an error in arithmetical calculation, as against the wretch who robbed, by every fraud that could elude the law, those who had already little of which they could be deprived, that he might riot a little more luxuriously, while the helpless, whom he had plundered, were starving around him.’ Now, why may we not say, in answer to the former objector, that the conformity of an action with the relations of the agent is the fitness for which Clarke contends? And why may not we reply to Dr. Brown, that—allowing, as we do, the necessity of that susceptibility of moral emotion for which he contends—the emotion of approbation which arises on the contemplation of a virtuous action is not the virtue of the action, nor the perception of its accordance with the relations of the agent, but the accordance itself? ‘That a being,’ says Dewar, ‘endowed with certain powers, is bound to love and obey the Creator and Preserver of all, is truth, whether I perceive it or no; and we cannot perceive it possible that it can ever be reversed.’

“All the relations to which reference has been made, are, in one sense, arbitrary. Our existence as creatures is to be ascribed to the mere good pleasure of God. The relations which bind society together, the conjugal, parental, filial relation, depend entirely upon the sovereign will of Him who gave us our being; but the conduct to which these relations oblige us, is by no means arbitrary. Having determined to constitute the relations, He could not but enjoin upon us the

conduct which his word prescribes. He was under no obligation to create us at all ; but, having given us existence, he could not fail to command us to love and obey him. There is a harmony between these relations, and these duties,—a harmony which is not only perceived by us, (for to state that merely, would seem to make our perceptions the rule, if not the foundation, of duty,) but which is perceived by the perfect intellect of God himself. And since the relations we sustain were constituted by God, since he is the Judge of the affections and conduct which harmonize with these relations,—that which appears right to Him, being right on that account,—rectitude may be regarded as conformity to the moral nature of God, the ultimate standard of virtue.”\*

. To the revealed will of God we may now turn for information on the interesting subject of morals ; and we shall find that the ethics of Christianity have a glory and perfection which philosophy has never heightened, and which its only true office is to display, and to keep before the attention of mankind.

\* Payne's Elements of Mental and Moral Science.

## CHAPTER II.

### *The Duties we owe to God.*

THE duties we owe to God are in Scripture summed up in the word "godliness," the foundation of which, and of duties of every other kind, is that entire

Submission to God, which springs from a due sense of that relation in which we stand to him, as creatures.

We have just seen that the right of an absolute sovereignty over us must, in the reason of the case, exist exclusively in Him that made us; and it is the perception and recognition of this, as a practical habit of the mind, which renders outward acts of obedience sincere and religious. The will of God is the only rule to man, in every thing on which that will has declared itself; and, as it lays its injunctions upon the heart as well as the life, the rule is equally in force when it directs our opinions, our motives, and affections, as when it enjoins or prohibits external acts. We are his because he made us; and to this is added the confirmation of this right by our redemption: "Ye are not your own, but bought with a price; wherefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are his." These ideas of absolute right to command on the part of God, and of absolute obligation to universal obedience on the part of man, are united in the profession of St. Paul, "Whose I am, and whom I serve;" and form the grand fundamental principle of godliness both in the Old and New Testament; the will of God being laid down in each, both as the highest reason and the most powerful motive to obedience. The application of this principle so established by the Scriptures will show how greatly superior is the ground on which Christianity places moral virtue to that of any other system.

For,

1. The will of God, which is the rule of duty, is authen-

ticated by the whole of that stupendous evidence which proves the Scriptures to be of divine original.

2. That will at once defines and enforces every branch of inward and outward purity, rectitude, and benevolence.

3. It annuls by its authority every other rule of conduct contrary to itself, whether it arise from custom, or from the example, persuasion, or opinions of others.

4. It is a rule which admits not of being lowered to the weak and fallen state of human nature ; but, connecting itself with a gracious dispensation of supernatural help, it directs the morally imbecile to that remedy, and holds every one guilty of the violation of all that he is by nature and habit unable to perform, if that remedy be neglected.

5. It accommodates not itself to the interests or even safety of men ; but requires that interest, honour, liberty, and life, should be surrendered, rather than it should sustain any violation.

6. It admits no exceptions in obedience, but requires it whole and entire ; so that outward virtue cannot be taken in the place of that which has its seat in the heart ; and it allows no acts to be really virtuous, but those which spring from a willing and submissive mind, and are done upon the vital principle of a distinct recognition of our rightful subjection to God.

A second duty is,

Love to God. To serve and obey God on the conviction that it is right to serve and obey him, is in Christianity joined with that love to God which gives life and animation to service, and renders it the means of exalting our pleasures, at the same time that it accords with our convictions. The supreme love of God is the chief, therefore, of what have been called our "theo-pathetic affections." It is the sum and the end of law ; and though lost by us in Adam, is restored to us by Christ. When it regards God absolutely, and in himself, as a Being of infinite and harmonious perfections and moral beauties, it is that movement of the soul towards him which is produced by admiration, approval, and delight. When it regards him relatively, it fixes upon the ceaseless emanations of his good-

ness to us in the continuance of the existence which he at first bestowed ; the circumstances which render that existence felicitous ; and, above all, upon that “ great love wherewith he loved us,” manifested in the gift of his Son for our redemption, and in saving us by his grace ; or, in the forcible language of St. Paul, upon “ the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness to us through Christ Jesus.” Under all these views an unbounded gratitude overflows the heart which is influenced by this spiritual affection. But the love of God is more than a sentiment of gratitude. It rejoices in his perfections and glories, and devoutly contemplates them as the highest and most interesting subjects of thought ; it keeps the idea of this supremely-beloved object constantly present to the mind ; it turns to it with adoring ardour from the business and distractions of life ; it connects it with every scene of majesty and beauty in nature, and with every event of general and particular providence ; it brings the soul into fellowship with God, real and sensible, because vital ; it moulds the other affections into conformity with what God himself wills or prohibits, loves or hates ; it produces an unbounded desire to please him, and to be accepted of him in all things ; it is jealous of his honour, unwearied in his service, quick to prompt to every sacrifice in the cause of his truth and his church ; and it renders all such sacrifices, even when carried to the extent of suffering and death, unreluctant and cheerful. It chooses God as the chief good of the soul, the enjoyment of which assures its perfect and eternal interest and happiness. “ Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee,” is the language of every heart, when its love of God is true in principle and supreme in degree.

If, then, the will of God is the perfect rule of morals ; and if supreme and perfect love to God must produce a prompt, an unwearied, a delightful subjection to his will, or rather, an entire and most free choice of it as the rule of all our principles, affections, and actions ; the importance of this affection in securing that obedience to the law of God in which true morality consists, is manifest ; and we clearly perceive the

reason why an inspired writer has affirmed, that "love is the fulfilling of the law." The necessity of keeping this subject before us under those views in which it is placed in the Christian system, and of not surrendering it to mere philosophy, is, however, an important consideration. With the philosopher the love of God may be the mere approval of the intellect ; or a sentiment which results from the contemplation of infinite perfection, manifesting itself in acts of power and goodness. In the Scriptures it is much more than either, and is produced and maintained by a different process. We are there taught that "the carnal mind is enmity to God ;" and is not, of course, capable of loving God. Yet this carnal mind may consist with deep attainments in philosophy, and with strongly impassioned poetic sentiment. The mere approval of the understanding ; and the susceptibility of being impressed with feelings of admiration, awe, and even pleasure, when the character of God is manifested in his works ; (as both may be found in "the carnal mind" which "is enmity to God ;") are not therefore the love of God. They are principles which enter into that love, since it cannot exist without them ; but they may exist without this affection itself, and be found in a vicious and unchanged nature. The love of God is a fruit of the Holy Spirit ; that is, it is implanted by him only in the souls which he has regenerated ; and, as that which excites its exercise is chiefly, and in the first place, a sense of the benefits bestowed by the grace of God in our redemption, and a well-grounded persuasion of our personal interest in those benefits, it necessarily presupposes our personal reconciliation to God through faith in the atonement of Christ, and that attestation of it to the heart by the Spirit of adoption of which we have before spoken. We here see, then, another proof of the necessary connexion of Christian morals with Christian doctrine, and how imperfect and deceptive every system must be which separates them. Love is essential to true obedience ; for when the Apostle declares love to be "the fulfilling of the law," he declares, in effect, that the law cannot be fulfilled without love ; and that every action which has not this for its principle, however virtuous in its show, fails



of accomplishing the precepts which are obligatory upon us. But this love to God cannot be felt so long as we are sensible of his wrath, and are in dread of his judgments. These feelings are incompatible with each other, and we must be assured of his reconciliation to us, before we are capable of loving him. Thus the very existence of the love of God implies the doctrines of the atonement, repentance, faith, and the gift of the Spirit of adoption to believers; and unless it be taught in this connexion, and through this process of experience, it will be exhibited only as a bright and beautiful object to which man has no access; or a fictitious and imitative sentimentality will be substituted for it, to the delusion of the souls of men.

A third leading duty is,

Trust in God. All creatures are dependent upon God for being and for well-being. Inanimate and irrational beings hold their existence, and the benefits which may accompany it, independently of any conditions to be performed on their part. Rational creatures are placed under another rule, and their felicity rests only upon their obedience. Whether, as to those intelligences who have never sinned, specific exercises of trust are required as a duty comprehended in their general obedience, we know not. But as to men, the whole Scripture shows, that faith or trust is a duty of the first class, and that they stand only by faith. Whether the reason of this may be the importance to themselves of being continually impressed with their dependence upon God, so that they may fly to him at all times, and escape the disappointments of self-confidence and creature-reliances; or that as all good actually comes from God, he ought to be recognised as its source, so that all creatures may glorify him; or whether other and more secret reasons may also be included; the fact, that this duty is solemnly enjoined, as an essential part of true religion, cannot be doubted. Nor can the connexion of this habit of devoutly confiding in God with our peace of mind be overlooked. We have so many proofs of the weakness both of our intellectual and physical powers, and see ourselves so liable to the influence of combinations of circumstances which

we cannot control, and of accidents which we cannot resist, that, unless we had assurances of being guided, upheld, and defended by a supreme power, we might become, and that not unreasonably, a prey to constant apprehensions, and the sport of the most saddening anticipations of the imagination. Our sole remedy from these would, in fact, only be found in insensibility and thoughtlessness; for to a reflecting and awakened mind, nothing except faith in God can shut out uneasy fears. In all ages, therefore, this has been the resource of devout men. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will we not fear," &c. (Psalm xlv. 1.) "Our fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them; they cried unto thee, and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and were not confounded." And from our Lord's sermon on the mount it is clear, that one end of his teaching was to deliver men from the piercing anxieties which the perplexities of this life are apt to produce, by encouraging them to confide in the care and bounty of their heavenly Father.

Our trust in God is enjoined in as many respects as he has been pleased to give us assurances of help, and promises of favour, in his own word. Beyond that, trust would be presumption, as not having authority; and to the full extent in which his gracious purposes towards us are manifested, it becomes a duty. And here, too, the same connexion of this duty with the leading doctrines of our redemption, which we have remarked under the last particular, also displays itself. If morals be taught independent of religion, either affiance in God must be excluded from the list of duties towards God, or otherwise it will be inculcated without effect. A man who is conscious of unremitted sins, and who must therefore regard the administration of the Ruler of the world as to him punitive and vengeful, can find no ground on which to rest his trust. All that he can do is, to hope that his relations to this Being may in future become more favourable; but, for the present, his fears must prevent the exercise of his faith. What course then lies before him, but, in the first instance, to seek the restoration of the favour of his offended God, in that method

which he has prescribed, namely, by repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ? Till a scriptural assurance is obtained of that change in his relations to God which is effected by the free and gracious act of forgiveness, all the reasons of general trust in the care, benediction, and guidance of God are vain as to him, because they are not applicable to his case. But when friendship is restored between the parties, faith, however unlimited, has the highest reason. It is then "a sure confidence in the mercy of God through Christ," as that mercy manifests itself in all the promises which God has been pleased to make to his children, and in all those condescending relations with which he has been pleased to invest himself, that under such manifestations he might win and secure our reliance. It is then the confidence not merely of creatures in a beneficent Creator, or of subjects in a gracious Sovereign, but of children in a parent. It respects the supply of every want, temporal and eternal; the wise and gracious ordering of our concerns; the warding off, or the mitigation, of calamities and afflictions; our preservation from all that can upon the whole be injurious to us; our guidance through life; our hope in death, and our future felicity in another world. This trust is a duty, because it is a subject of command; and also because, after such demonstrations of kindness, distrust would imply a dishonourable denial of the love and faithfulness of God, and often also a criminal dependence upon the creature. It is a habit essential to piety. On that condition we obtain promises, by making them the subjects of prayer; by its influence, anxieties destructive to that calm contemplative habit, of which true religion is both the offspring and the nurse, are expelled from the heart; a spiritual character is thus given to man, who walks as "seeing Him who is invisible;" and a noble and cheerful courage is infused into the soul, which elevates it above all cowardly shrinking from difficulty, suffering, pain, and death, and affords a practical exemplification of the exhortation of one who had tried the value of this grace in a great variety of exigencies: "Wait upon the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, upon the Lord."

The fear of God is associated with love, and trust, in every part of holy Scripture ; and is enjoined upon us as another of our leading duties.

This, however, is not a servile passion ; for then it could not consist with love to God, and with delight and affiance in him. It is true that “the fear which hath torment,” that which is accompanied with painful apprehensions of his displeasure, arising from a just conviction of our personal liability to it, is enjoined upon the careless and the impious. To produce this, the word of God fulminates in threatenings, and his judgments march through the earth, exhibiting terrible examples of vengeance against one nation or individual for the admonition of others. But that fear of God which arises from apprehension of personal punishment, is not designed to be the habit of the mind ; nor is it included in the frequent phrase, “the fear of the Lord,” when that is used to express the whole of practical religion, or its leading principles. In that case its nature is, in part, expressed by the term “reverence,” which is a due and humbling sense of the divine majesty, produced and maintained in a mind regenerated by the Holy Spirit, by devout meditations upon the perfections of his infinite nature, his eternity and omniscience, his constant presence with us in every place, the depths of his counsels, the might of his power, the holiness, truth, and justice of his moral character ; and on the manifestations of these glories in the works of that mighty visible nature with which we are surrounded, in the government of angels, devils, and men, and in the revelations of his inspired word.

With this deeply reverential awe of God is, however, constantly joined in Scripture, a persuasion of our conditional liability to his displeasure. For since all who have obtained his mercy and favour by Christ, receive those blessings through an atonement, which itself demonstrates that we are under a righteous administration, and that neither is the law of God repealed, nor does his justice sleep ; and further, since the saving benefits of that atonement are conditional, and we ourselves have the power to turn aside the benefit of its interposition from us, or to forfeit it when once received, in whole or

in part ; it is clear that whilst there is a full provision for our deliverance from the "spirit of bondage unto fear," there is sufficient reason why we ought to be so impressed with our spiritual dangers, as to produce in us that cautionary fear of the holiness, justice, and power of God, which shall deter us from offending, and lead us often to view, with a restraining and salutary dread, those consequences of unfaithfulness and disobedience to which, at least whilst we remain on earth, we are liable. Powerful, therefore, as are the reasons by which the scriptural revelation of the mercy and benevolence of God enforces a firm affiance in him, it exhorts us not to be high-minded, but to fear ; to fear lest we come short of the promise of entering into his rest ; to be in "the fear of the Lord all the day long," and to pass the whole time of our sojourning here in fear.

This scriptural view of the fear of God, as combining both reverence of the divine majesty, and a suitable apprehension of our conditional liability to his displeasure, is of large practical influence.

It restrains our faith from degenerating into presumption ; our love, into familiarity ; our joy, into carelessness. It nurtures humility, watchfulness, and the spirit of prayer. It induces a reverent habit of thinking and speaking of God, and gives solemnity to the exercises of devotion. It presents sin to us under its true aspect, as dangerous, as well as corrupting to the soul ; as darkening our prospects in a future life, as well as injurious to our peace in the present : And it gives strength and efficacy to that most important practical moral principle, the constant reference of our inward habits of thought and feeling, and our outward actions, to the approbation of God.

Upon these internal principles that moral habit and state, which is often expressed by the term "holiness," rests. Separate from these principles, it can only consist in visible acts, imperfect in themselves, because not vital, and, however commended by men, abominable to God, who trieth the heart. But when such acts proceed from these sources, they are proportioned to the strength and purity of the principle which

originates them, except as in some cases they may be influenced and deteriorated by an uninformed or weak judgment. An entire submission to God, a perfect love to him, firm affiance in his covenant engagements, and that fear which abases the spirit before God, and departs even from the appearance of evil, when joined with a right understanding of the word of God, render "the man of God perfect," and "thoroughly furnish him to every good work."

Besides these inward principles and affections, there are, however, several other habits and acts, a public performance of which, as well as their more secret exercises, have been termed by Divines our external duties towards God ; the term "external," however, being so used as not to exclude those exercises of the heart from which they must all spring, if acceptable to God. The first is

Prayer ; which is a solemn addressing of our minds to God, as the Fountain of being and happiness, the Ruler of the world, and the Father of the family of man. It includes in it the acknowledgment of the divine perfections and sovereignty ; thankfulness for the mercies we have received ; penitential confession of our sins ; and an earnest entreaty of blessings, both for ourselves and others. When vocal, it is an external act, but supposes the correspondence of the will and affections ; yet it may be purely mental, all the acts of which it is composed being often conceived in the mind, when not clothed in words.

That the practice of prayer is enjoined upon us in Scripture, is sufficiently proved by a few quotations : " Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened." (Matt. vii. 7.) " Watch ye therefore, and pray always." (Luke xxi. 36.) " Be careful for nothing ; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (Phil. iv. 6.) " Pray without ceasing." (1 Thess. v. 17.) That prayer necessarily includes earnestness, and that perseverance which is inspired by strong desire, is evident from the Jews being so severely reprov'd for drawing near to God with their lips, whilst their hearts were far from him ;—from the general

rule of our Lord laid down in his conversation with the woman of Sychar, "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth;" (John iv. 24;)—and from Romans xii. 12, "Continuing instant in prayer." Here the term, *προσκατερουντες*, is very energetic, and denotes, as Chrysostom observes, "fervent, persevering, and earnest prayer." Our Lord also delivered a parable to teach us that we ought to pray and not faint; and we have examples of the success of reiterating our petitions, when for some time they appear disregarded. One of these is afforded in the case of the woman of Canaan, a first and a second time repulsed by our Lord; and another occurs in 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9: "For this I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me; and he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee," &c. This passage also affords an instance of praying distinctly for particular blessings,—a practice which accords also with the direction in Phil. iv. 6, to make our "requests known unto God;" which includes not only our desires for good generally, but also those particular requests which are suggested by special circumstances. Directions to pray for national and public blessings occur in Psalm cxxii. 6: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee:" In Zech. x. 1: "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds," (or lightnings,) "and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field:" In 1 Tim. ii. 1—3: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour," &c. More particular intercession for others is also authorized and enjoined: "Peter was therefore kept in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." (Acts xii. 5.) "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea," &c. (Rom. xv. 30.) "Confess

your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." (James v. 16.)

It follows, therefore, from these scriptural passages, that prayer is a duty ; that it is made a condition of our receiving good at the hand of God ; that every case of personal pressure, or need, may be made the subject of prayer ; that we are to intercede for all immediately connected with us, for the church, for our country, and for all mankind ; that both temporal and spiritual blessings may be the subject of our supplications ; and that these great and solemn exercises are to be accompanied with grateful thanksgivings to God as the author of all blessings already bestowed, and the benevolent object of our hope as to future interpositions and supplies. Prayer, in its particular Christian view, is briefly and well-defined in the Westminster Catechism : " Prayer is the offering of our desires to God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and a thankful acknowledgment of his mercies."

The reason on which this great and efficacious duty rests, has been a subject of some debate. On this point, however, we have nothing explicitly stated in the Scriptures. From them we learn only, that God has appointed it ; that he enjoins it to be offered in faith, that is, faith in Christ, whose atonement is the meritorious and procuring cause of all the blessings to which our desires can be directed ; and that prayer so offered is an indispensable condition of our obtaining the blessings for which we ask. As a matter of inference, however, we may discover some glimpses of the reason in the Divine Mind on which its appointment rests. That reason has sometimes been said to be the moral preparation and state of fitness produced in the soul for the reception of the divine mercies which the act and, more especially, the habit of prayer must induce. Against this stands the strong and, in a scriptural view, the fatal objection, that an efficiency is thus ascribed to the mere act of a creature to produce those great and, in many respects, radical changes in the character of man, which we are taught, by inspired authority, to refer to the direct influences of the Holy Spirit. What is it that fits man for forgiveness, but simply repentance?



Yet that is expressly said to be the gift of Christ, and supposes strong operations of the illuminating and convincing Spirit of truth, the Lord and Giver of spiritual life ; and if the mere acts and habit of prayer had efficiency enough to produce a spiritual repentance, then every formalist attending with ordinary seriousness to his devotions must, in consequence, become a penitent. Again : If we pray for spiritual blessings aright, that is, with an earnestness of desire which arises from a due apprehension of their importance, and a preference of them to all earthly good, who does not see that this implies such a deliverance from the earthly and carnal disposition which characterizes our degenerate nature, that an agency far above our own, however we may employ it, must be supposed ? or else, if our own prayers could be efficient up to this point, we might, by the continual application of this instrument, complete our regeneration, independent of that grace of God which, after all, this theory brings in. It may indeed be said, that the grace of God operates by our prayers to produce in us a state of moral fitness to receive the blessings we ask. But this gives up the point contended for,—the moral efficiency of prayer ; and refers the efficiency to another agent working by our prayers as an instrument. Still, however, it may be affirmed, that the Scriptures nowhere represent prayer as an instrument for improving our moral state, though in the hands of divine grace, in any other way than as the means of bringing into the soul new supplies of spiritual life and strength. It is therefore more properly to be considered as a condition of our obtaining that grace by which such effects are wrought, than as the instrument by which it effects them. In fact, all genuine acts of prayer depend upon a grace previously bestowed, and from which alone the disposition and the power to pray proceed. So it was said of Saul of Tarsus, “ Behold, he prayeth ! ” He prayed in fact then for the first time ; but that was in consequence of the illumination of his mind as to his spiritual danger, effected by the miracle on the way to Damascus, and the grace of God which accompanied the miracle. Nor does the miraculous character of the means by which conviction was produced in his mind, affect the relevancy of this to ordinary

cases. By whatever means God may be pleased to fasten the conviction of our spiritual danger upon our minds, and to awaken us out of the long sleep of sin, that conviction must precede real prayer, and comes from the influence of his grace, rendering the means of conviction effectual. Thus it is not the prayer which produces the conviction, but the conviction which gives birth to the prayer; and if we pursue the matter into its subsequent stages, we shall come to the same result. We pray for what we feel we want; that is, for something not in our possession; we obtain this either by impartation from God, to whom we look up as the only Being able to bestow the good for which we ask him; or else we obtain it, according to this theory, by some moral efficiency being given to the exercise of prayer to work it in us. Now, the latter hypothesis is in many cases manifestly absurd. We ask for pardon of sin, for instance; but this is an act of God done for us, quite distinct from any moral change which prayer may be said to produce in us, whatever efficiency we may ascribe to it; for no such change in us can be pardon, since that must proceed from the party offended. We ask for increase of spiritual strength; and prayer is the expression of that want. But if it supply this want by its own moral efficiency, it must supply it in proportion to its intensity and earnestness; which intensity and earnestness can only be called forth by the degree in which the want is felt; so that the case supposed is contradictory and absurd, as it makes the sense of want to be in proportion to the supply which ought to abate or remove it. And if it be urged, that prayer at least produces in us a fitness for the supply of spiritual strength, because it is excited by a sense of our wants, the answer is, that the fitness contended for consists in that sense of want itself which must be produced in us by the previous agency of grace, or we should never pray for supplies. There is, in fact, nothing in prayer simply which appears to have any adaptation, as an instrument, to effect a moral change in man, although it should be supposed to be made use of by the influence of the Holy Spirit. The word of God is properly an instrument, because it contains the doctrine which that Spirit explains and applies, and the motives to faith and obe-

dience which he enforces upon the conscience and affections ; and though prayer brings these truths and motives before us, prayer cannot properly be said to be an instrument of our regeneration, because that which is thus brought by prayer to bear upon our case is the word of God itself introduced into our prayers, which derive their sole influence in that respect from that circumstance. Prayer simply is the application of an insufficient to a sufficient Being for the good which the former cannot otherwise obtain, and which the latter only can supply ; and as that supply is dependent upon prayer, and in the nature of the thing consequent, prayer can in no good sense be said to be the instrument of supplying our wants, or fitting us for their supply, except relatively, as a mere condition appointed by the donor.

If we must inquire into the reason of the appointment of prayer, and it can scarcely be considered as a purely arbitrary institution, that reason seems to be, the preservation in the minds of men of a solemn and impressive sense of God's agency in the world, and the dependence of all creatures upon him. Perfectly pure and glorified beings, no longer in a state of probation, and, therefore, exposed to no temptations, may not need this institution ; but men in their fallen state are constantly prone to forget God, to rest in the agency of second causes, and to build upon a sufficiency in themselves. This is at once a denial to God of the glory which he rightly claims, and a destructive delusion to creatures, who, in forsaking God as the object of their constant affiance, trust but in broken reeds, and attempt to drink from "broken cisterns which can hold no water." It is then equally in mercy to us, as in respect to his own honour and acknowledgment, that the divine Being has suspended so many of his blessings, and those of the highest necessity to us, upon the exercise of prayer ; an act which acknowledges his uncontrollable agency, and the dependence of all creatures upon him ; our insufficiency and his fullness ; and lays the foundation of that habit of gratitude and thanksgiving which is at once so ameliorating to our own feelings, and so conducive to a cheerful obedience to the will of God. And if this reason for the injunction of prayer is

no where in the Scriptures stated in so many words, it is a principle uniformly supposed as the foundation of the whole scheme of religion which they have revealed.

To this duty objections have been sometimes offered, at which it may be well at least to glance.

One has been grounded upon a supposed predestination of all things which come to pass ; and the argument is, that as this established predetermination of all things cannot be altered, prayer, which supposes that God will depart from it, is vain and useless. The answer which a pious predestinarian would give to this objection is, that the argument drawn from the predestination of God lies with the same force against every other human effort, as against prayer ; and that as God's predetermination to give food to man does not render the cultivation of the earth useless and impertinent, so neither does the predestination of things shut out the necessity and efficacy of prayer. It would also be urged, that God has ordained the means as well as the end ; and that although he is an unchangeable Being, it is a part of the unchangeable system which he has established, that prayer shall be heard and accepted.

Those who have not these views of predestination will answer the objection differently ; for if the premises of such a predestination as is assumed by the objection, and conceded in the answer, be allowed, the answer is unsatisfactory. The Scriptures represent God, for instance, as purposing to inflict a judgment upon an individual or a nation, which purpose is often changed by prayer. In this case, either God's purpose must be denied, and then his threatenings are reduced to words without meaning ; or the purpose must be allowed, in which case, either prayer breaks in upon predestination, if understood absolutely, or it is vain and useless. To the objection so drawn out it is clear that no answer is given by saying, that the means as well as the end are predestinated, since prayer in such cases is not a means to the end, but an instrument of thwarting it ; or is a means to one end in opposition to another end, which, if equally predestinated with the same absoluteness, is a contradiction.

The true answer is, that although God has absolutely pre-

determined some things, there are others, which respect his government of free and accountable agents, which he has but conditionally predetermined. The true immutability of God, we have already showed,\* consists, not in his adherence to his purposes, but in his never changing the principles of his administration; and he may therefore, in perfect accordance with his pre-ordination of things, and the immutability of his nature, purpose to do, under certain conditions dependent upon the free agency of man, what he will not do under others; and for this reason, that an immutable adherence to the principles of a wise, just, and gracious government requires it. Prayer is in Scripture made one of these conditions; and if God has established it as one of the principles of his moral government to accept prayer, in every case in which he has given us authority to ask, he has not, we may be assured, entangled his actual government of the world with the bonds of such an eternal predestination of particular events, as either to reduce prayer to a mere form of words, or not to be able himself, consistently with his decrees, to answer it, whenever it is encouraged by his express engagements.

A second objection is, that as God is infinitely wise and good, his wisdom and justice will lead him to bestow "whatever is fit for us without praying; and if anything be not fit for us, we cannot obtain it by praying." To this Dr. Paley very well replies,† that "it may be agreeable to perfect wisdom to grant that to our prayers which it would not have been agreeable to the same wisdom to have given us without praying for." This, independent of the question of the authority of the Scriptures, which explicitly enjoin prayer, is the best answer which can be given to the objection; and it is no small confirmation of it, that it is obvious to every reflecting man, that for God to withhold favours till asked for, "tends," as the same writer observes, "to encourage devotion among his rational creatures, and to keep up and circulate a knowledge and sense of their dependency upon him."

But it is urged, "God will always do what is best, from

\* Part II., chap. 28.

† Moral Philosophy.

the moral perfection of his nature, whether we pray or not." This objection, however, supposes that there is but one mode of acting for the best, and that the divine will is necessarily determined to that mode only; "both which positions," says Paley, "presume a knowledge of universal nature, much beyond what we are capable of attaining." It is, indeed, a very unsatisfactory mode of speaking, to say, "God will always do what is best;" since we can conceive him capable in all cases of doing what is still better for the creature, and also that the creature is capable of receiving more and more from his infinite fulness for ever. All that can be rationally meant by such a phrase is, that, in the circumstances of the case, God will always do what is most consistent with his own wisdom, holiness, and goodness; but then the disposition to pray, and the act of praying, add a new circumstance to every case, and often bring many other new circumstances along with them. It supposes humility, contrition, and trust, on the part of the creature; and an acknowledgment of the power and compassion of God, and of the merit of the atonement of Christ; all which are manifestly new positions, so to speak, of the circumstances of the creature, which upon the very principle of the objection, rationally understood, must be taken into consideration.

But if the efficacy of prayer as to ourselves be granted, its influence upon the case of others is said to be more difficult to conceive. This may be allowed without at all affecting the duty. Those who bow to the authority of the Scriptures will see, that the duty of praying for ourselves and for others rests upon the same divine appointment; and to those who ask for the reason of such intercession in behalf of others, it is sufficient to reply, that the efficacy of prayer being established in one case, there is the same reason to conclude that our prayers may benefit others, as well as any other effort we may use. It can only be by divine appointment that one creature is made dependent upon another for any advantage, since it was doubtless in the power of the Creator to have rendered each independent of all but himself. Whatever reason, therefore, might lead him to connect and interweave the interests of one man with the benevolence of another, will be the leading

reason for that kind of mutual dependence which is implied in the benefit of mutual prayer. Were it only that a previous sympathy, charity, and good-will, are implied in the duty, and must, indeed, be cultivated in order to it, and be strengthened by it, the wisdom and benevolence of the institution would, it is presumed, be apparent to every well-constituted mind. That all prayer for others must proceed upon a less perfect knowledge of them than we have of ourselves, is certain : That all our petitions for them must be, even in our own mind, more conditional than those which respect ourselves, though many of these must be subjected to the principles of a general administration, which we but partially apprehend ; and that all spiritual influences upon others, when they are the subject of our prayers, will be understood by us as liable to the control of their free agency, must also be conceded : And, therefore, when others are concerned, our prayers may often be partially or wholly fruitless. He who believes the Scriptures will, however, be encouraged by the declaration, that “ the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man,” for his fellow-creatures, “ availeth much ;” and he who demands something beyond mere authoritative declaration, as he cannot deny that prayer is one of those instruments by which another may be benefited, must acknowledge that, like the giving of counsel, it may be of great utility in some cases, although it should fail in others ; and that as no man can tell how much good counsel may influence another, or in many cases say whether it has ultimately failed or not, so is it with prayer. It is a part of the divine plan, as revealed in his word, to give many blessings to man independent of his own prayers, leaving the subsequent improvement of them to himself. They are given in honour of the intercession of Christ, man’s great Advocate ; and they are given, subordinately, in acceptance of the prayers of Christ’s church, and of righteous individuals. And when many or few devout individuals become thus the instruments of good to communities, or to whole nations, there is no greater mystery in this than in the obvious fact, that the happiness or misery of large masses of mankind is often greatly affected by the wisdom or the errors, the skill or the incompetence,

the good or the bad conduct, of a few persons, and often of one.

The general duty of prayer is usually distributed into four branches,—ejaculatory, private, social, and public; each of which is of such importance as to require a separate consideration.

EJACULATORY PRAYER is the term given to those secret and frequent aspirations of the heart to God for general or particular blessings, by which a just sense of our habitual dependence upon God, and of our wants and dangers, may be expressed, at those intervals when the thoughts can detach themselves from the affairs of life, though but for a moment, whilst we are still employed in them. It includes, too, all those short and occasional effusions of gratitude, and silent ascriptions of praise, which the remembrance of God's mercies will excite in a devotional spirit, under the same circumstances. Both, however, presuppose what Divines have called "the spirit of prayer," which springs from a sense of our dependence upon God, and is a breathing of the desires after intercourse of thought and affection with Him, accompanied with a reverential and encouraging sense of his constant presence with us. The cultivation of this spirit is clearly enjoined upon us as a duty by the Apostle Paul, who exhorts us to "pray without ceasing, and in every thing to give thanks;" and also to "set our affections upon things above;"—exhortations which imply a holy and devotional frame and temper of mind, and not merely acts of prayer performed at intervals. The high and unspeakable advantages of this habit are, that it induces a watchful and guarded mind; prevents religion from deteriorating into form without life; unites the soul to God, its light and strength; induces continual supplies of divine influence; and opposes an effectual barrier, by the grace thus acquired, against the encroachments of worldly anxieties and the force of temptations. The existence of this spirit of prayer and thanksgiving is one of the grand distinctions between nominal and real Christians; and by it the measure of vital and effective Christianity enjoyed by any individual may ordinarily be determined.

PRIVATE PRAYER. This, as a duty, rests upon the examples of good men in Scripture; upon several passages of an injunc-



tive character in the Old Testament ; and, in the New, upon the express words of our Lord, which, whilst they suppose the practice of individual prayer to have been generally acknowledged as obligatory, enjoin that it should be strictly private : “ But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet,\* and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.” In this respect, also, Christ has himself placed us under the obligation of his own example ; the Evangelists having been inspired to put on record several instances of his retirement into absolute privacy, that he might “ pray.” The reason for this institution of private devotion appears to have been to incite us to a friendly and confiding intercourse with God in all those particular cases which most concern our feelings and our interests ; and it is a most affecting instance of the condescension and sympathy of God, that we are thus allowed to use a freedom with him, in “ pouring out our hearts,” which we could not do with our best and dearest friends. It is also most worthy of our notice, that when this duty is enjoined upon us by our Lord, he presents the divine Being before us under a relation most of all adapted to inspire that unlimited confidence with which he would have us to approach him : —“ Pray to thy Father which is in secret.” Thus is the dread of his omniscience, indicated by his “ seeing in secret,” and of those other overwhelming attributes which omnipresence and omniscience cannot fail to suggest, mitigated, or only employed to inspire greater freedom, and a stronger affiance.

**FAMILY PRAYER.** Paley states the peculiar use of family prayer to consist in its influence upon servants and children, whose attention may be more easily commanded by this than by public worship. “ The example and authority of a master and father act, also, in this way with greater force ; and the ardour of devotion is better supported, and the sympathy more easily propagated through a small assembly, connected by the affections of domestic society, than in the presence of a mixed congregation.” There is, doubtless, weight in these remarks ;

\* *Εἰς τὸ ταμειον*. Kuinoel observes, that the word “ answers to the Hebrew *תִּבְלָה*, an upper room set apart for retirement and prayer, among the Orientals.”

but they are defective, both in not stating the obligation of this important duty, and in not fully exhibiting its advantages.

The absence of an express precept for family worship has, it is true, been urged against its obligation even by some who have still considered it as a prudential and useful ordinance. But the strict obligation of so important a duty is not to be conceded for a moment, since it so plainly arises out of the very constitution of a family ; and is confirmed by the earliest examples of the church of God. On the first of these points the following observations, from a very able and interesting work,\* are of great weight :—

“ The disposition of some men, professing Christianity, to ask peremptorily for a particular precept in all cases of incumbent moral duty, is one which every Christian would do well to examine ; not only that he may never be troubled with it himself, but that he may be at no loss in answering such a man, if he is called to converse with him. The particular duty to which he refers,—say, for example, family worship,—is comparatively of small account. His question itself is indicative not merely of great ignorance ; it is symptomatic of the want of religious principle. When a man says that he can only be bound to such a duty, a moral duty, by a positive and particular precept, I am satisfied that he could not perform it, in obedience to any precept whatever ; nor could he even now, though he were to try. The truth is, that this man has no disposition towards such worship, and he rather requires to be informed of the grounds of all such obligation.

“ The duty of family devotion, therefore, let it be remembered, though it had been minutely enjoined as to both substance and season, would not, after all, have been founded only on such injunctions. I want the reader thoroughly to understand the character of a Christian, the constitution of the family ; and out of this character and that constitution, he will find certain duties to arise necessarily ; that is, they are essential to the continuance and well-being of himself as a Christian parent, and of the constitution over which he is set.

\* Anderson On the Domestic Constitution.

In this case there can be no question as to their obligation, and for a precept there is no necessity. The Almighty, in his word, has not only said nothing in vain, but nothing except what is necessary. Now, as to family worship, for a particular precept I have no wish ; no, not even for the sake of others, because I am persuaded that the Christian, in his sober senses, will naturally obey, and no other can.

“ To apply, however, this request for a precise precept to some other branches of family duty : What would be thought of me, were I to demand an express precept to enforce my obligation to feed my children, and another to oblige me to clothe them ? one to express my obligation to teach them the use of letters, and another to secure my training them to lawful or creditable professions or employments ? ‘ All this,’ very properly you might reply, ‘ is absurd in the highest degree ; your obligation rests upon much higher ground ; nay, doth not nature itself teach you in this, and much more than this ? ’ ‘ Very true,’ I reply ; ‘ and is renewed nature, then, not to teach me far more still ? To what other nature are such words as these addressed ?—Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.’

“ Independently, however, of all this evidence with any rational Christian parent, I may confirm and establish his mind on much higher ground than even that which these pointed examples afford. To such a parent I might say, ‘ Without hesitation, you will admit that your obligations to your family are to be measured now, and on the day of final account, by your capacity,—as a man by your natural, as a Christian by your spiritual, capacity ; and, however you may feel conscious of falling short daily, that you are under obligation to honour God to the utmost limit of this capacity. You will also allow that, standing where you do, you are not now, like a solitary orphan without relatives, to be regarded only as a single individual. God himself, your Creator, your Saviour, and your Judge, regards you as the head of a family ; and, therefore,

in possession of a sacred trust ; you have the care of souls. Now, if you really do measure obligation by capacity, then you will also at once allow, that you must do what you can, that He may, from your family, have as much honour as possible.

“ ‘ Without hesitation you will also allow that God daily preserves you. And does he not also preserve your family ? But if he preserves, he has a right of property in each and all under your roof. Shall he not, therefore, have from you acknowledgment of this ? If daily he preserves, shall he not be daily acknowledged ? And if acknowledged at all, how ought he to be so, if not upon your knees ? And how can they know this, if they do not hear it ?

“ ‘ Without hesitation you will also allow that you are a social as well as a reasonable being. And often have you, therefore, felt how much the soothing influence of their sweet society has sustained you under your cares and trials, and grief itself. O, surely then, as a social being, you owe to them social worship ; nor should you ever forget, that, in ancient days, there was social worship here before it could be any where else.’ ”

The same excellent writer has not, in his subsequent argument, given to the last remark in the above quotation all the force which it demands ; for, that social worship existed before worship more properly called public, that is, worship in indiscriminate assemblies, is the point which, when followed out, most fully establishes the obligation. A great part of the worship of the patriarchal times, at least, was domestic. The worship of God was observed in the families of Abraham, Jacob, and Job ; nay, the highest species of worship, the offering of sacrifices, which it could not have been without divine appointment. It arose, therefore, out of the original constitution of a family, that the father and natural head was invested with a sacred and a religious character, and that with reference to his family ; and if this has never been revoked by subsequent prohibition, but, on the contrary, if its continuance has been subsequently recognised, then the family priesthood continues in force, and stands on the same ground as several other religious obligations, which have passed from one dispensation of revealed religion to another, without express re-enactment.

Let us then inquire, whether any such revocation of this office, as originally vested in the father of a family, took place after the appointment of a particular order of Priests under the Mosaic economy. It is true that national sacrifices were offered by the Aaronical Priests, and perhaps some of those consuetudinary sacrifices which, in the patriarchal ages, were offered by the heads of families, and had reference specially to the general dispensation of religion under which every family was equally placed ; yet the passover was a solemn religious act, the domestic nature of which is plainly marked, and it was to be an ordinance for ever, and therefore was not taken out of the hands of the heads of families by the institution of the Aaronical priesthood, although the ceremony comprehended several direct acts of worship. The solemn instruction of the family is also in the law of Moses enjoined upon the father : “Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children ;” and he was also directed to teach them the import of the different festivals, and other commemorative institutions. Thus the original relation of the father to his family, which existed in the patriarchal age, is seen still in existence, though changed in some of its circumstances by the law. He is still the religious teacher ; still he offers prayers for them to God ; and still blesses,—an act which imports both prayer, praise, and official benediction. So the family of Jesse had a yearly sacrifice. (1 Sam. xx. 6. ) So David, although not a Priest, returned to “bless his household ;” and our Lord filled the office of the master of a family, as appears from his eating the passover with his disciples, and presiding as such over the whole rite : And although the passage, “Pour out thy fury upon the Heathen, and upon the families which call not upon thy name,” (Jer. x. 25,) does not perhaps decidedly refer to acts of domestic worship, yet it is probable that the phraseology was influenced by that practice among the pious Jews themselves ;—neither did the Heathen nationally, nor in their families, acknowledge God. Nor is it a trifling confirmation of the ancient practice of a formal and visible domestic religion, that in Paganism, which corrupted the forms of the true religion, and especially those of the patriarchal dispensation, we see the signs of a family as well as a public idolatry,

as exhibited in their private "chambers of imagery," their household deities ; and the religious ceremonies which it was incumbent upon the head of every house to perform.

The sacred character and office of the father and master of a household passed from Judaism into Christianity ; for here, also, we find nothing which revokes and repeals it. A duty so well understood both among Jews and even Heathens, as that the head of the house ought to influence its religious character, needed no special injunction. The father or master who believed was baptized, and all his house ; the first religious societies were chiefly domestic ; and the antiquity of domestic religious services among Christians leaves it unquestionable that, when the number of Christians increased so as to require a separate assembly in some common room or church, the domestic worship was not superseded. But for the division of verses in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians, it would scarcely have been suspected that the first and the second verses contained two distinct and unconnected precepts : " Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven ; continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving ;" a collocation of persons and duties which seems to intimate that the sense of the Apostle was, that the servant, the slave, should partake of the benefit of those continual prayers and daily thanksgivings which it is enjoined upon the master to offer.

As the obligation to this branch of devotion is passed over by Paley, so the advantages of family worship are but very imperfectly stated by him. The offering of prayer to God in a family cannot but lay the ground of a special regard to its interests and concerns on the part of Him who is thus constantly acknowledged ; and the advantage, therefore, is more than a mere sentimental one ; and more than that of giving effect to the " master's example." The blessings of providence and of grace, defence against evil, or peculiar supports under it, may thus be expected from Him who has said, " In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths ;" and that when two or three are met in his name, he is " in the midst of them." The family is a " church in a house ;" and

its ministrations, as they are acceptable to God, cannot but be followed by his direct blessing.

**PUBLIC PRAYER**, under which we include the assembling of ourselves together for every branch of public worship.

The scriptural obligation of this is partly founded upon example, and partly on precept ; so that no person who admits that authority, can question this great duty without manifest and criminal inconsistency. The institution of public worship under the law, the practice of synagogue worship among the Jews from at least the time of Ezra,\* cannot be questioned ; both which were sanctioned by the practice of our Lord and his Apostles. The course of the synagogue worship became indeed the model of that of the Christian church. It consisted in prayer, reading and explaining the Scriptures, and singing of psalms ; and thus one of the most important means of instructing nations, and of spreading and maintaining the influence of morals and religion among a people, passed from the Jews into all Christian countries.

The preceptive authority for our regular attendance upon public worship is either inferential or direct. The command to publish the Gospel includes the obligation of assembling to hear it : The name by which a Christian society is designated in Scripture is a “ church ;” which signifies an assembly for the transaction of some business ; and, in the case of a Christian assembly, the business must be necessarily spiritual, and include the sacred exercises of prayer, praise, and hearing the Scriptures. But we have more direct precepts, although the practice was obviously continued from Judaism, and was therefore consuetudinary. Some of the Epistles of Paul are commanded to be read in the churches. The singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, is enjoined as an act of solemn worship to the Lord ; and St. Paul cautions the Hebrews that they “ forsake not the assembling of themselves together.” The practice of the primitive age is also manifest from the

\* Some writers contend that synagogues were as old as the ceremonial law. That they were ancient is proved from Acts xv. 21 : “ Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day. ”

Epistles of St. Paul. The Lord's supper was celebrated by the body of believers collectively ; and this Apostle prescribes to the Corinthians regulations for the exercises of prayer and prophesyings, "when they came together in the church,"—the assembly. The statedness and order of these "holy offices" in the primitive church appear also from the apostolical Epistle of St. Clement: "We ought also, looking into the depths of the divine knowledge, to do all things in order, whatsoever the Lord hath commanded to be done. We ought to make our oblations, and perform our holy offices, at their appointed seasons ; for these he hath commanded to be done, not irregularly or by chance, but at determinate times and hours ; as he hath likewise ordained by his supreme will, where, and by what persons, they shall be performed ; that so all things, being done according to his pleasure, may be acceptable in his sight." This passage is remarkable for urging a divine authority for the public services of the church, by which St. Clement, no doubt, means the authority of the inspired directions of the Apostles.

The ends of the institution of public worship are of such obvious importance, that it must ever be considered as one of the most condescending and gracious dispensations of God to man. By this his church confesses his name before the world ; by this the public teaching of his word is associated with acts calculated to affect the mind with that solemnity which is the best preparation for hearing it to edification. It is thus that the ignorant and vicious are collected together, and instructed and warned ; the invitations of mercy are published to the guilty, and the sorrowful and afflicted are comforted. In these assemblies God, by his Holy Spirit, diffuses his vital and sanctifying influence, and takes the devout into a fellowship with himself, from which they derive strength to do and to suffer his will in the various scenes of life, whilst he thus affords them a foretaste of the deep and hallowed pleasures which are reserved for them at "his right hand for evermore." Prayers and intercessions are here heard for national and public interests ; and whilst the benefit of these exercises descends upon a country, all are kept sensible of the dependence of every



public and personal interest upon God. Praise calls forth the grateful emotions, and gives cheerfulness to piety : And that "instruction in righteousness" which is so perpetually repeated, diffuses the principles of morality and religion throughout society ; enlightens and gives activity to conscience ; raises the standard of morals ; attaches shame to vice, and praise to virtue ; and thus exerts a powerfully purifying influence upon mankind. Laws thus receive a force, which, in other circumstances, they could not acquire, even were they enacted in as great perfection ; and the administration of justice is aided by the strongest possible obligation and sanction being given to legal oaths. The domestic relations are rendered more strong and interesting by the very habit of the attendance of families upon the sacred services of the sanctuary of the Lord ; and the fact of the rich and the poor meeting together there, and standing on the same common ground of sinners before God, equally dependent upon him, and equally suing for his mercy, has a powerful, though often an insensible, influence in humbling the pride which is nourished by superior rank, and in raising the lower classes above abjectness of spirit, without injuring their humility. Piety, benevolence, and patriotism are equally dependent for their purity and vigour upon the regular and devout worship of God in the simplicity of the Christian dispensation.

A few words on Liturgies or forms of prayer may here have a proper place.

The necessity of adhering to the simplicity of the first age of the church, as to worship, need scarcely be defended by argument. If no liberty were intended to be given to accommodate the modes of worship to the circumstances of different people and times, we should, no doubt, have had some express directory on the subject in Scripture ; but, in the exercise of this liberty, steady regard is to be paid to the spirit and genius and simple character of Christianity, and a respectful deference to the practice of the Apostles and their immediate successors. Without these, formality and superstition, to both of which human nature is very liable, are apt to be induced ; and when once they enter they increase, as the history of the church

sufficiently shows, indefinitely, until true religion is buried beneath the mass of observances which have been introduced as her aids and handmaids. Our Lord's own words are here directly applicable and important: "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." The worship must be adapted to the spiritual nature of God, and to his revealed perfections. To such a Being the number of prayers, the quantity of worship, (so to speak,) to which corrupt churches have attached so much importance, can be of no value. As a Spirit, he seeks the worship of the spirit of man; and regards nothing external in that worship but as it is the expression of those emotions of humility, faith, gratitude, and hope, which are the principles he condescendingly approves in man. True worship, we are also taught by these words, is the worship of the heart; it springs from humility, faith, gratitude, and hope; and its final cause, or end, is to better man, by bringing upon his affections the sanctifying and comforting influence of grace. The modes of worship which best promote this end, and most effectually call these principles into exercise, are those therefore which best accord with our Lord's rule: And if in the apostolic age we see this end of worship most directly accomplished, and these emotions most vigorously and with greatest purity excited, the novelties of human invention can add nothing to the effect, and for that very reason have greatly diminished it. In the Latin and Greek Churches we see a striking conformity in the vestments, the processions, the pictures and images, and other parts of a complex and gorgeous ceremonial, to the Jewish typical worship, and to that of the Gentiles, which was an imitation of it without typical meaning. But it is not even pretended that in these circumstances it is founded upon primitive practice; or, if pretended, this is obviously an impudent assumption.

Liturgies, or forms of service, do not certainly come under this censure, except when they contain superstitious acts of devotion to saints, or are so complicated, numerous, and lengthened, that the only principle to which they can be referred is the common but unworthy notion, that the Divine Being is rendered placable by continued service; or that the

wearisome exercise of vocal prayers, continued for long periods, and in painful postures, is a necessary penance to man, and, as such, acceptable to God. In those reformed churches of Christendom in which they are used, they have been greatly abridged, as well as purified from the corruptions of the middle ages. In some they are more copious than in others, whilst many religious societies have rejected their use altogether; and in a few they are so used as to afford competent space also for extempore devotion.

The advocates and opponents of the use of forms of prayer in public worship have both run into great extremes, and attempted generally to prove too much against each other.

If the use of forms of prayer in prose be objected to, their use in verse ought to be rejected on the same principle; and extemporaneous psalms and hymns must, for consistency's sake, be required of a Minister, as well as extemporaneous prayers; or the practice of singing, as a part of God's worship, must be given up. Again: If the objection to the use of a form of prayer be not in its matter; but merely as it contains petitions not composed by ourselves, or by the officiating Minister on the occasion; the same objection would lie to our using any petitions found in the Psalms or other devotional parts of Scripture, although adapted to our case, and expressed in words far more fitting than our own. If we think precomposed prayers incompatible with devotion, we make it essential to devotion that we should frame our desires into our own words; whereas nothing can be more plain, than that whoever has composed the words, if they correspond with our desires, they become the prayer of our hearts, and are, as such, acceptable to God. The objection to petitionary forms composed by others, supposes also that we know the things which it is proper for us to ask without the assistance of others. This may be sometimes the case; but as we must be taught what to pray for by the holy Scriptures, so, in proportion as we understand what we are authorized to pray for by those Scriptures, our prayers become more varied, and distinct, and comprehensive, and, therefore, edifying. But all helps to the understanding of the Scriptures, as to what they encourage us

to ask of God, is a help to us in prayer. Thus the exposition of Christian privileges and blessings from the pulpit affords us this assistance ; thus the public extempore prayers we hear offered by Ministers and enlightened Christians assist us in the same respect ; and the written and recorded prayers of the wise and pious in different ages fulfil the same office, and to so great an extent that scarcely any who offer extempore prayer escape falling into phrases and terms of expression, or even entire petitions, which have been originally derived from liturgies. Even in extempore services, the child accustomed to the modes of precatory expression used by the parent, and the people to those of their Ministers, imitate them unconsciously ; finding the desires of their hearts already embodied in suitable and impressive words.

The objection, therefore, to the use of forms of prayer, when absolute, is absurd, and involves principles which no one acts upon, or can act upon. It also disregards example and antiquity. The High Priest of the Jews pronounced yearly a form of benediction. The Psalms of David and other inspired Hebrew poets, whether chanted or read makes no difference, were composed for the use of the sanctuary, and formed a part of the regular devotions of the people. Forms of prayer were used in the synagogue service of the Jews, which, though multiplied in subsequent times, so as to render the service tedious and superstitious, had among them some that were in use between the return from the captivity and the Christian era, and were therefore sanctioned by the practice of our Lord and his Apostles.\* John Baptist appears also to have given a form of prayer to his disciples, in which he was followed by our Lord. The latter has indeed been questioned ; and were it to be argued that our Lord intended that form of prayer alone to be used, too much would be proved by the advocates of forms. On the other hand, although the words, "After this manner pray ye," intimate that the Lord's prayer was given as a model of prayer, so the words in another Evangelist, "When ye pray, say," as fully indicate an intention to

\* Prideaux's *Connexion*. Fol. Edit., vol. i., p. 304.

prescribe a form. It seems, therefore, fair, to consider the Lord's prayer as intended both as a model and a form ; and he must be very fastidious who, though he uses it as the model of his own prayers, by paraphrasing its petitions in his own words, should scruple to use it in its native simplicity and force as a form. That its use as a form, though not its exclusive use, was originally intended by our Lord, appears, I think, very clearly, from the disciples desiring to be taught to pray, "as John taught his disciples." If, as it has been alleged, the Jewish Rabbies, at so early a period, were in the custom of giving short forms of prayer to their disciples, to be used in the form given, or to be enlarged upon by the pupil at his pleasure, this would fully explain the request of the disciples. However, without laying much stress upon the antiquity of this practice, we may urge, that, if John Baptist gave a form of prayer to his followers, the conduct of our Lord in teaching his disciples to pray, by what is manifestly a regularly connected series of petitions, is accordant with their request ; but if the Baptist only taught what topics ought to be introduced in prayer, and the disciples of Jesus wished to be instructed in like manner, it is difficult to account for their request being granted, not by his giving directions as to the topics of prayer, but by his uttering a regular prayer itself. That our Lord intended that prayer to be used as adapted to that period of his dispensation ; and that the petitions in that form are admirably applicable to every period of Christianity, and may be used profitably ; and that its use implies a devout respect to the words of Him "who spake as never man spake ;" are points from which there does not appear any reasonable ground of dissent.

The practice of the primitive church may also be urged in favour of liturgies. Founded as the early worship of Christians was upon the model of the synagogue, the use, by them, of short forms of prayer, or collects, is at least probable. It must, indeed, be granted that extended and regular liturgies were of a later date ; and that extempore prayers were constantly offered in their assemblies for public worship. This appears clear enough from several passages in St. Paul's Epistles, and the writings of the Fathers ; so that no liturgical

service can be so framed as entirely to shut out, or not to leave convenient space for, extempore prayer by the Minister without departing from the earliest models. But the Lord's prayer and a series of collects appear to have been in frequent use in the earliest times; which seems allowed even by Lord King, although he proves that the practice for the Minister to pray "according to his ability,"\* that is, to use his gifts in extempore prayer, was a constant part of the public worship in the first ages.

Much, therefore, is evidently left to wisdom and prudence in a case where we have no explicit direction in the Scriptures; and as a general rule to be modified by circumstances, we may perhaps with safety affirm, that the best mode of public worship is that which unites a brief scriptural liturgy with extempore prayers by the Minister. This will more clearly appear, if we consider the exceedingly futile character of those objections which have been reciprocally employed by the opponents and advocates of forms, when they have carried their views to an extreme.

To public liturgies it has been objected, that "forms of prayer composed in one age become unfit for another, by the unavoidable change of language, circumstances, and opinions." To this it may be answered, 1. That whatever weight there may be in the objection, it can only apply to cases where the form is, in all its parts, made imperative upon the officiating Minister; or where the church imposing it neglects to accommodate the liturgy to meet all such changes when innocent. 2. That the general language of no form of prayer among ourselves has become obsolete in point of fact; a few expressions only being, according to modern notions, uncouth or unusual. 3. That the petitions they contain are suited, more or less, to all men at all times, whatever may be their circumstances; and that as to opinions, if they so change in a church as to become unscriptural, it is an advantage arising out of a public form that it is auxiliary to the Scriptures in bearing testimony against them; that a natural reverence for ancient forms tends

\* This expression occurs in Justin Martyr's Second Apology, where he particularly describes the mode of primitive worship.

to preserve their use, after opinions have become lax ; and that they are sometimes the means of recovering a church from error.

Another objection is, that the perpetual repetition of the same form of words produces weariness and inattentiveness in the congregation. There is some truth in this ; but it is often carried much too far. A devotional mind will not weary in the repetition of a scriptural and well-arranged liturgy, if not too long to be sustained by the infirmity of the body. Whether forms are used, or extempore prayer be practised, effort and application of mind are necessary in the hearer to enter into the spirit of the words ; and each mode is wearisome to the careless and indevout, though not, we grant, in equal degrees. The objection, as far as it has any weight, would be reduced to nothing, were the liturgy repeated only at one service on the Sabbath, so that at the others the Minister might be left at liberty to pray with more direct reference to the special circumstances of the people, the church, and the world.

The general character which all forms of prayer must take, is a third objection ; but this is not true absolutely of any liturgy, and much less of that of the Church of England. All prayer must, and ought to be, general, because we ask for blessings which all others need as much as ourselves ; but that particularity which goes into the different parts of a Christian's religious experience and conflicts, dangers and duties, is found very forcibly and feelingly expressed in that Liturgy. That greater particularity is often needed than this excellent form of prayer contains, must, however, be allowed ; and this, as well as prayer suited to occasional circumstances, might be supplied by the more frequent use of extempore prayer, without displacing the Liturgy itself. The objection, therefore, has no force, except when extempore prayer is excluded, or confined within too narrow a limit.

On the other hand, the indiscriminate advocates of liturgies have carried their objections to extempore prayer to a very absurd extreme. Without a liturgy the folly and enthusiasm of many, they say, is in danger of producing extravagant or

impious addresses to God ; that a congregation is confused between their attention to the Minister, and their own devotion, being ignorant of each petition before they hear it ; and to this they add the labouring recollection or tumultuous delivery of many extempore speakers. The first and third of these objections can have force only where foolish, enthusiastic, and incompetent Ministers are employed ; and so the evil, which can but rarely exist, is easily remedied. The second objection lay as forcibly against the inspired prayers of the Scriptures at the time they were first uttered, as against extempore prayers now ; and it would lie against the use of the Collects, and occasional unfamiliar forms of prayer introduced into the regular Liturgy, in the case of all who are not able to read, or who happen not to have Prayer-Books. We may also observe, that if evils of so serious a kind are the necessary results of extempore praying ; if devotion is hindered, and pain and confusion of mind produced, and impiety and enthusiasm promoted ; it is rather singular that extempore prayer should have been so constantly practised in the primitive church, and that it should not have been wholly prohibited to the Clergy on all occasions, in later times. The facts, however, of our own age prove that there is, to say the least, an equal degree of devotion, an equal absence of confusedness of thought, in the worshippers, where no liturgy is used, as where extempore prayer is unknown. Instances of folly and enthusiasm are also but few in the ministry of such churches ; and when they occur, they have a better remedy than entirely to exclude extempore prayers by liturgies, and thus to shut out the great benefits of that mode of worship, for the loss of which no exclusive form of service can atone.

The whole, we think, comes to this,—that there are advantages in each mode of worship ; and that, when combined prudently, the public service of the sanctuary has its most perfect constitution. Much, however, in the practice of churches is to be regulated by due respect to differences of opinion, and even prejudice, on a point upon which we are left at liberty by the Scriptures, and which must, therefore, be ranked among things prudential. Here, as in many other things, Chris-



tians must give place to each other, and do all things in charity.

Praise and thanksgiving are implied in prayer, and included indeed in our definition of that duty, as given above. But beside those ascriptions of praise and expressions of gratitude, which are to be mingled with the precatory part of our devotions, solemn psalms and hymns of praise, to be sung with the voice, and accompanied with the melody of the heart, are of apostolic injunction, and form an important and exhilarating part of the worship of God, whether public or social. It is thus that God is publicly acknowledged as the great source of all good, and the end to which all good ought again to tend in love and obedience ; and the practice of stirring up our hearts to a thankful remembrance of his goodness, is equally important in its moral influence upon our feelings now, and as it tends to prepare us for our eternal enjoyment hereafter. "Prayer," says a Divine of the English Church, "awakens in us a sorrowful sense of wants and imperfections, and confession induces a sad remembrance of our guilt and miscarriages ; but thanksgiving has nothing in it but a warm sense of the mightiest love, and the most endearing goodness, as it is the overflow of a heart full of love, the free sally and emission of soul, that is captivated and endeared by kindness. To laud and magnify the Lord is the end for which we were born, and the heaven for which we were designed ; and when we are arrived to such a vigorous sense of divine love as the blessed inhabitants of heaven have attained, we shall need no other pleasure or enjoyment to make us for ever happy, but only to sing eternal praises to God and the Lamb ; the vigorous relish of whose unspeakable goodness to us will so inflame our love, and animate our gratitude, that to eternal ages we shall never be able to refrain from breaking out into new songs of praise, and then every new song will create a new pleasure, and every new pleasure create a new song."\*

\* Dr. Scott.

## CHAPTER III.

### *The Duties we owe to God :—The Lord's Day.*

As we have just been treating of the public worship of Almighty God, so we may fitly add some remarks upon the consecration of one day in seven for that service, that it may be longer continued than on days in which the business of life calls for our exertions, and our minds be kept free from its distractions.

The obligation of a sabbatical institution upon Christians, as well as the extent of it, have been the subjects of much controversy. Christian churches themselves have differed; and the theologians of the same church. Much has been written upon the subject on each side, and much research and learning employed, sometimes to darken a very plain subject.

The circumstance, that the observance of a Sabbath is no where, in so many words, enjoined upon Christians, by our Lord and his Apostles, has been assumed as the reason for so great a license of criticism and argument as that which has been often indulged in to unsettle the strictness of the obligation of this duty. Its obligation has been represented as standing upon the ground of inference only, and, therefore, of human opinion; and thus the opinion against sabbatical institutions has been held up as equally weighty with the opinion in their favour; and the liberty which has been claimed, has been too often hastily concluded to be Christian liberty. This, however, is travelling much too fast; for if the case were as much a matter of inference, as such persons would have it, it does not follow that every inference is alike good; or that the opposing inferences have an equal force of truth, any more than of piety.

The question respects the will of God as to this particular point,—Whether one day in seven is to be wholly devoted to religion, exclusive of worldly business and worldly pleasures.

Now, there are but two ways in which the will of God can be collected from his word; either by some explicit injunction upon all, or by incidental circumstances. Let us then allow for a moment, that we have no such explicit injunction; yet we have certainly none to the contrary: Let us allow that we have only for our guidance in inferring the will of God in this particular, certain circumstances declarative of his will; yet this important conclusion is inevitable, that all such indicative circumstances are in favour of a sabbatical institution, and that there is not one which exhibits any thing contrary to it. The seventh day was hallowed at the close of the creation; its sanctity was afterwards marked by the withholding of the manna on that day, and the provision of a double supply on the sixth, and that previous to the giving of the law from Sinai: It was then made a part of that great epitome of religious and moral duty, which God wrote with his own finger on tables of stone; it was a part of the public political law of the only people to whom Almighty God ever made himself a political Head and Ruler; its observance is connected throughout the prophetic age with the highest promises, its violations with the severest maledictions; it was among the Jews in our Lord's time a day of solemn religious assembling, and was so observed by him; when changed to the first day of the week, it was the day on which the first Christians assembled; it was called, by way of eminence, "the Lord's day;" and we have inspired authority to say, that, both under the Old and New Testament dispensations, it is used as an expressive type of the heavenly and eternal rest. Now, against all these circumstances so strongly declarative of the will of God, as to the observance of a sabbatical institution, what circumstance or passage of Scripture can be opposed, as bearing upon it a contrary indication? Truly, not one; except those passages in St. Paul in which he speaks of Jewish Sabbaths, with their Levitical rites, and of a distinction of days, both of which marked a weak or a criminal adherence to the abolished ceremonial dispensation; but which touch not the Sabbath as a branch of the moral law, or as it was changed, by the authority of the Apostles, to the first day of the week.

If, then, we were left to determine the point by inference merely, how powerful is the inference as to what is the will of God with respect to the keeping of the Sabbath on the one hand, and how totally unsupported is the opposite inference on the other !

It may also be observed, that those who will so strenuously insist upon the absence of an express command as to the Sabbath in the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles, as explicit as that of the Decalogue, assume, that the will of God is only obligatory when manifested in some one mode which they judge to be most fit. But this is a monstrous hypothesis ; for however the will of God may be manifested, if it is with such clearness as to exclude all reasonable doubt, it is equally obligatory as when it assumes the formality of legal promulgation. Thus the Bible is not all in the form of express and authoritative command ; it teaches by examples, by proverbs, by songs, by incidental allusions and occurrences ; and yet is, throughout, a manifestation of the will of God as to morals and religion in their various branches ; and if disregarded, it will be so at every man's peril.

But strong as this ground is, we quit it for a still stronger. It is wholly a mistake, that the Sabbath, because not re-enacted with the formality of the Decalogue, is not explicitly enjoined upon Christians, and that the testimony of Scripture to such an injunction is not unequivocal and irrefragable. We shall soon prove that the Sabbath was appointed at the creation of the world, and, consequently, for all men, and, therefore, for Christians ; since there was never any repeal of the original institution. To this we add, that if the moral law be the law of Christians, then is the Sabbath as explicitly enjoined upon them as upon the Jews. But that the moral law is our law, as well as the law of the Jews, all but Antinomians must acknowledge ; and few, we suppose, will be inclined to run into the fearful mazes of that error, in order to support lax notions as to the obligation of the Sabbath ; into which, however, they must be plunged, if they deny the law of the Decalogue to be binding upon us. That

it is so bound upon us, a few passages of Scripture will prove as well as many.

Our Lord declares that he came "not to destroy the law and the Prophets, but to fulfil." Take it, that by "the law," he meant both the moral and the ceremonial : Ceremonial law could only be fulfilled in him, by realizing its types ; and moral law, by upholding its authority. For "the Prophets," they admit of a similar distinction : They either enjoin morality, or utter prophecies of Christ ; the latter of which were fulfilled in the sense of accomplishment, the former by being sanctioned and enforced. That the observance of the Sabbath is a part of the moral law, is clear from its being found in the Decalogue, the doctrine of which our Lord sums up in the moral duties of loving God and our neighbour ; and for this reason the injunctions of the Prophets, on the subject of the Sabbath, are to be regarded as a part of their moral teaching.\* Some Divines have, it is true, called the observance of the Sabbath a "positive," and not a moral, "precept." If it were so, its obligation is precisely the same, in all cases where God himself has not relaxed it ; and if a positive precept only, it has surely a special eminence given to it, by being placed in the list of the Ten Commandments, and being capable, with them, of an epitome which resolves them into the love of God and our neighbour.† The truth seems to be, that it is a mixed precept, and not wholly positive ; but intimately, perhaps essentially, connected with several moral principles, of homage to God, and mercy to men ; with the obligation of religious worship, of public religious worship, and of undistracted public worship ; and this will account for its collocation in the Decalogue with the highest duties of religion, and the leading rules of personal and social morality.

The passage from our Lord's sermon on the Mount, with its context, is a sufficiently explicit enforcement of the moral law, generally, upon his followers ; but when he says, "The Sabbath was made for man," he clearly refers to its original institution, as a universal law, and not to its obligation upon

\* See this stated more at large, Part III., Chap. I.

† See Vol. II. of these Institutes, p. 425.

the Jews only, in consequence of the enactments of the law of Moses. It "was made for man," not as he may be a Jew, or a Christian ; but as man, a creature bound to love, worship, and obey his God and Maker, and on his trial for eternity.

Another explicit proof that the law of the Ten Commandments, and, consequently, the law of the Sabbath, is obligatory upon Christians, is found in the answer of the Apostle to an objection to the doctrine of justification by faith : "Do we then make void the law through faith ?" (Rom. iii. 31 ; ) which is equivalent to asking, Does Christianity teach, that the law is no longer obligatory on Christians, because it teaches that no man can be justified by it ? To this he answers, in the most solemn form of expression, "God forbid ; yea, we establish the law." Now, the sense in which the Apostle uses the term "the law" in this argument is indubitably marked in chapter vii. 7 : "I had not known sin, but by the law ; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet ;" which being a plain reference to the tenth command of the Decalogue, as plainly shows that the Decalogue is "the law" of which he speaks. This, then, is the law which is "established" by the Gospel ; and this can mean nothing else but the establishment and confirmation of its authority, as the rule of all inward and outward holiness. Whoever, therefore, denies the obligation of the Sabbath on Christians, denies the obligation of the whole Decalogue ; and there is no real medium between the acknowledgment of the divine authority of this sacred institution, as a universal law, and that gross corruption of Christianity, generally designated "Antinomianism."

Nor is there any force in the dilemma into which the Antisabbatarians would push us, when they argue that, if the case be so, then are we bound to the same circumstantial exactitude of obedience as to this command, as to the other precepts of the Decalogue ; and, therefore, that we are bound to observe the seventh day, reckoning from Saturday, as the Sabbath-day. But, as the command is partly positive, and partly moral, it may have circumstances which are capable of being altered in perfect accordance with the moral principles on which it rests,

and the moral ends which it proposes. Such circumstances are not, indeed, to be judged of on our own authority. We must either have such general principles for our guidance as have been revealed by God, and cannot, therefore, be questioned, or some special authority from which there can be no just appeal. Now, though there is not on record any divine command issued to the Apostles, to change the Sabbath from the day on which it was held by the Jews, to the first day of the week; yet, when we see that this was done in the apostolic age, and that St. Paul speaks of the Jewish Sabbaths as not being obligatory upon Christians, whilst he yet contends that the whole moral law is obligatory upon them; the fair inference is, that this change of the day was made by divine direction. It is at least more than inference, that the change was made under the sanction of inspired men; and those men, the appointed rulers in the church of Christ; whose business it was to "set all things in order" which pertained to its worship and moral government. We may rest well enough, therefore, satisfied with this,—that as a Sabbath is obligatory upon us, we act under apostolic authority for observing it on the first day of the week, and thus commemorate at once the creation and the redemption of the world.

Thus, even if it were conceded, that the change of the day was made by the agreement of the Apostles, without express directions from Christ, (which is not probable,) it is certain that it was not done without express authority confided to them by Christ; but it would not even follow from this change, that they did in reality make any alteration in the law of the Sabbath, either as it stood at the time of its original institution at the close of the creation, or in the Decalogue of Moses. The same portion of time which constituted the seventh day from the creation, could not be observed in all parts of the earth; and it is not probable, therefore, that the original law expresses more than that a seventh day, or one day in seven, the seventh day after six days of labour, should be thus appropriated, from whatever point the enumeration might set out, or the hebdomadal cycle begin. For if more had been intended, then it would have been necessary to establish a rule

for the reckoning of days themselves, which has been different in different nations ; some reckoning from evening to evening, as the Jews now do, others from midnight to midnight, &c. So that those persons in this country and in America, who hold their Sabbath on Saturday, under the notion of exactly conforming to the Old Testament, and yet calculate the days from midnight to midnight, have no assurance at all that they do not desecrate a part of the original Sabbath, which might begin, as the Jewish Sabbath now, on Friday evening ; and, on the contrary, hallow a portion of a common day, by extending the Sabbath beyond Saturday evening. Even if this were ascertained, the differences of latitude and longitude would throw the whole into disorder ; and it is not probable that an universal law should have been fettered with that circumstantial exactness which would have rendered difficult, and sometimes doubtful, astronomical calculations necessary in order to its being obeyed according to the intention of the Lawgiver. Accordingly we find, says Mr. Holden, that

“ In the original institution it is stated in general terms, that God blessed and sanctified the seventh day, which must undoubtedly imply the sanctity of every seventh day ; but not that it is to be subsequently reckoned from the first demiurgic day. Had this been included in the command of the Almighty, something, it is probable, would have been added declaratory of the intention ; whereas expressions the most undefined are employed ; not a syllable is uttered concerning the order and number of the days ; and it cannot reasonably be disputed that the command is truly obeyed by the separation of every seventh day from common to sacred purposes, at whatever given time the cycle may commence. The difference in the mode of expression here from that which the sacred historian has used in the first chapter, is very remarkable. At the conclusion of each division of the work of creation, he says, ‘ The evening and the morning were the first day,’ and so on ; but at the termination of the whole, he merely calls it ‘ the seventh day ;’ a diversity of phrase which, as it would be inconsistent with every idea of inspiration to suppose it undesigned, must have been intended to denote a day, leaving it to each people as to



what manner it is to be reckoned. The term obviously imports the period of the earth's rotation round its axis, while it is left undetermined whether it shall be counted from evening or morning, from noon or midnight. The terms of the law are, 'Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath-day, and hallowed it.' With respect to time, it is here mentioned in the same indefinite manner as at its primeval institution, nothing more being expressly required than to observe a day of sacred rest after every six days of labour. The seventh day is to be kept holy; but not a word is said as to what epoch the commencement of the series is to be referred; nor could the Hebrews have determined from the Decalogue what day of the week was to be kept as their Sabbath. The precept is not, Remember the seventh day of the week, to keep it holy; but, 'Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy;' and in the following explication of these expressions, it is not said that the seventh day of the week is the Sabbath, but without restriction, 'The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God;' not the seventh according to any particular method of computing the septenary cycle, but, in reference to the six before mentioned, every seventh day in rotation after six of labour."\*

Thus that part of the Jewish law, the Decalogue, which, on the authority of the New Testament, we have shown to be obligatory upon Christians, leaves the computation of the hebdomadal cycle undetermined; and, after six days of labour, enjoins the seventh as the Sabbath, to which the Christian practice as exactly conforms as the Jewish. It is not, however, left to every individual to determine which day should be his Sabbath, though he should fulfil the law so far as to abstract the seventh part of his time from labour. It was ordained for worship, for public worship; and it is therefore necessary that the Sabbath should be uniformly observed by a whole com-

\* Holden On the Sabbath.

munity at the same time. The Divine Legislator of the Jews interposed for this end, by special direction, as to his people. The first Sabbath kept in the wilderness was calculated from the first day in which the manna fell ; and with no apparent reference to the creation of the world. By apostolic authority, it is now fixed to be held on the first day of the week ; and thus one of the great ends for which it was established, that it should be a day of “ holy convocation,” is secured.

The above observations proceed upon the ground, that the Sabbath, according to the fair interpretation of the words of Moses, was instituted upon the creation of the world. But we have had Divines of considerable eminence in the English Church, who have attempted to disprove this. The reason of the zeal displayed by some of them on this question may be easily explained.

All the churches of the Reformation did not, indeed, agree in their views of the Sabbath ; but the Reformers of England and Scotland generally adopted the strict and scriptural view ; and after them the Puritans. The opponents of the Puritans, in their controversies with them, and especially after the Restoration, associated a strict observance of the Sabbath with hypocrisy and disaffection ; and no small degree of ingenuity and learning was employed to prove, that, in the intervals of public worship, pleasure or business might be lawfully pursued ; and that this Christian festival stands on entirely different grounds from that of the Jewish Sabbath. The appointment of a Sabbath for man, at the close of the creation, was unfriendly to this notion ; and an effort therefore was made to explain away the testimony of Moses in the book of Genesis, by alleging that the Sabbath is there mentioned by *prolepsis* or anticipation. Of the arguments of this class of Divines, Paley availed himself in his “ Moral Philosophy,” and has become the most popular authority on this side of the question.

Paley’s argument is well summed up, and satisfactorily answered, in the able work which has been above quoted :—

“ Among those who have held that the Pentateuchal record, above cited, is proleptical, and that the Sabbath is to be considered a part of the peculiar laws of the Jewish polity, no one

has displayed more ability than Dr. Paley. Others on the same side have exhibited far more extensive learning, and have exercised much more patient research ; but for acuteness of intellect, for coolness of judgment, and a habit of perspicacious reasoning, he has been rarely, if ever, excelled. The arguments which he has approved, must be allowed to be the chief strength of the cause ; and, as he is at once the most judicious and most popular of its advocates, all that he has advanced demands a careful and candid examination. The doctrine which he maintains is, that the Sabbath was not instituted at the creation ; that it was designed for the Jews only ; that the assembling upon the first day of the week for the purpose of public worship, is a law of Christianity, of divine appointment ; but that the resting on it longer than is necessary for attendance on these assemblies, is an ordinance of human institution ; binding, nevertheless, upon the conscience of every individual of a country in which a weekly Sabbath is established, for the sake of the beneficial purposes which the public and regular observance of it promotes, and recommended perhaps, in some degree, to the divine approbation, by the resemblance it bears to what God was pleased to make a solemn part of the law which he delivered to the people of Israel, and by its subserviency to many of the same uses. Such is the doctrine of this very able writer in his ‘Moral and Political Philosophy ;’ a doctrine which places the Sabbath on the footing of civil laws, recommended by their expediency, and which, being sanctioned by so high an authority, has probably given great encouragement to the lax notions concerning the Sabbath which unhappily prevail.

“ Dr. Paley’s principal argument is, that the first institution of the Sabbath took place during the sojourning of the Jews in the wilderness. Upon the complaint of the people for want of food, God was pleased to provide for their relief by a miraculous supply of manna, which was found every morning upon the ground about the camp : ‘ And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating ; and when the sun waxed hot, it melted. And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for

one man ; and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord : Bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe ; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade ; and it did not stink,' (as it had done before, when some of them left it till the morning,) 'neither was there any worm therein. And Moses said, Eat that to-day ; for to-day is a Sabbath unto the Lord : To-day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it ; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws ? See, for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days ; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day.'

" From this passage, Dr. Paley infers that the Sabbath was first instituted in the wilderness ; but, to preclude the possibility of misrepresenting his argument, I will quote his own words : ' Now, in my opinion, the transaction in the wilderness above recited was the first actual institution of the Sabbath. For if the Sabbath had been instituted at the time of the creation, as the words in Genesis may seem at first sight to import ; and if it had been observed all along from that time to the departure of the Jews out of Egypt, a period of about two thousand five hundred years ; it appears unaccountable that no mention of it, no occasion of even the obscurest allusion to it, should occur, either in the general history of the world before the call of Abraham, which contains, we admit, only a few memoirs of its early ages, and those extremely abridged ; or, which is more to be wondered at, in that of the lives of the first three Jewish Patriarchs, which, in many parts of the account, is sufficiently circumstantial and domestic. Nor is there, in the passage above quoted from the sixteenth chapter

of Exodus, any intimation that the Sabbath, when appointed to be observed, was only the revival of an ancient institution, which had been neglected, forgotten, or suspended ; nor is any such neglect imputed either to the inhabitants of the old world, or to any part of the family of Noah ; nor, lastly, is any permission recorded to dispense with the institution during the captivity of the Jews in Egypt, or on any other public emergency.’

“ As to the first part of this reasoning, if it were granted that in the history of the patriarchal ages no mention is made of the Sabbath, nor even the obscurest allusion to it, it would be unfair to conclude that it was not appointed previous to the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt. If instituted at the creation, the memory of it might have been forgotten in the lapse of time, and the growing corruption of the world ; or, what is more probable, it might have been observed by the Patriarchs, though no mention is made of it in the narrative of their lives, which, however circumstantial in some particulars, is, upon the whole, very brief and compendious. There are omissions in the sacred history much more extraordinary. Excepting Jacob’s supplication at Bethel, scarcely a single allusion to prayer is to be found in all the Pentateuch ; yet, considering the eminent piety of the worthies recorded in it, we cannot doubt the frequency of their devotional exercises. Circumcision, being the sign of God’s covenant with Abraham, was beyond all question punctually observed by the Israelites ; yet, from their settlement in Canaan, no particular instance is recorded of it till the circumcision of Christ, comprehending a period of about one thousand five hundred years. No express mention of the Sabbath occurs in the Books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, the First and Second of Samuel, or the First of Kings, though it was, doubtless, regularly observed all the time included in these histories. In the Second Book of Kings, and the First and Second of Chronicles, it is mentioned only twelve times, and some of them are merely repetitions of the same instance. If the Sabbath is so seldom spoken of in this long historical series, it can be nothing wonderful if it should not be mentioned in the summary account of the patriarchal ages.

“But though the Sabbath is not expressly mentioned in the history of the antediluvian and patriarchal ages, the observance of it seems to be intimated by the division of time into weeks. In relating the catastrophe of the flood, the historian informs us that Noah, at the end of forty days, opened the window of the ark; ‘and he stayed yet other seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; and the dove came in to him in the evening, and lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf, plucked off. So Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. And he stayed yet other seven days, and sent forth the dove, which returned not again unto him any more.’ The term ‘week’ is used by Laban in reference to the nuptials of Leah, when he says, ‘Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also, for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years.’ A week of days is here plainly signified, the same portion of time which, in succeeding ages, was set apart for nuptial festivities, as appears from the Book of Esther, where the marriage-feast of Vashti lasted seven days, and more particularly from the account of Samson’s marriage-feast. Joseph and his brethren mourned for their father Jacob seven days.

“That the computation of time by weeks obtained from the most remote antiquity, appears from the traditionary and written records of all nations, the numerous and undeniable testimonies of which have been so often collected and displayed, that it would be worse than useless to repeat them.

“Combining all these testimonies together, they fully establish the primitive custom of measuring time by the division of weeks; and prevailing as it did among nations separated by distance, having no mutual intercourse, and wholly distinct in manners, it must have originated from one common source, which cannot reasonably be supposed any other than the memory of the creation preserved in the Noahic family, and handed down to their posterities. The computation by days, months, and years, arises from obvious causes, the revolution of the moon, and the annual and diurnal revolutions of the sun; but the division of time by periods of seven days has no foundation in any natural or visible septenary change; it must,

therefore, have originated from some positive appointment, or some tradition anterior to the dispersion of mankind, which cannot well be any other than the memory of the creation and primeval blessing of the seventh day.

“ Dr. Paley’s next argument is, that ‘ there is not in the sixteenth chapter of Exodus any intimation that the Sabbath, when appointed to be observed, was only the revival of an ancient institution which had been neglected, forgotten, or suspended.’ The contrary, however, seems the more natural inference from the narrative. It is mentioned exactly in the way an historian would, who had occasion to speak of a well-known institution. For instance : When the people were astonished at the double supply of manna on the sixth day, Moses observes, ‘ This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord ;’ which, as far as we know, was never said previously to this transaction, but at the close of the creation. This, surely, is the language of a man referring to a matter with which the people were already acquainted, and recalling it to their remembrance. In the fifth verse, God promises on the sixth day twice as much as they gather daily. For this no reason is given ; which seems to imply, that it was already known to the children of Israel. Such a promise, without some cause being assigned for so extraordinary a circumstance, would have been strange indeed ; and if the reason had been, that the seventh day was now for the first time to be appointed a festival, in which no work was to be done, would not the author have stated this circumstance ? Again : It is said, ‘ Six days ye shall gather it ; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none ;’ and, ‘ for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days.’ Here the Sabbath is spoken of as an ordinance with which the people were familiar. A double quantity of manna was given on the sixth day, because the following day, as they well knew, was the Sabbath, in which God rested from his work, and which was to be kept as a day of rest, and holy to the Lord. It is likewise mentioned incidentally, as it were, in the recital of the miraculous supply of manna, without any notice of its

being enjoined upon that occasion for the first time ; which would be a very surprising circumstance, had it been the original establishment of the Sabbath. In short, the entire phraseology in the account of this remarkable transaction accords with the supposition, and with it alone, that the Sabbath had been long established, and was well known to the Israelites.

“ That no neglect of the Sabbath is ‘imputed either to the inhabitants of the old world, or to any of the family of Noah,’ is very true ; but, so far from there being any proof of such negligence, there is, on the contrary, as we have seen, much reason for believing that it was duly observed by the pious Sethites of the old world, and, after the deluge, by the virtuous line of Shem. True, likewise, it is, that there is not ‘any permission recorded to dispense with the institution during the captivity of the Jews in Egypt, or on any other public emergency.’ But where is the evidence that such a permission would be consistent with the divine wisdom ? And if not, none such would either be given or recorded. At any rate, it is difficult to see how the silence of Scripture, concerning such a circumstance, can furnish an argument in vindication of the opinion, that the Sabbath was first appointed in the wilderness. To allege it for this purpose, is just as inconclusive as it would be to argue, that the Sabbath was instituted subsequent to the return of the Jews from Babylonia, because neither the observance of it, nor any permission to dispense with it, during the captivity, is recorded in Scripture.

“ The passage in the second chapter of Genesis is next adduced by Dr. Paley, and he pronounces it not inconsistent with his opinion ; ‘for as the seventh day was erected into a Sabbath on account of God’s resting upon that day from the work of creation, it was natural enough in the historian, when he had related the history of the creation, and of God’s ceasing from it on the seventh day, to add, And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that on it he had rested from all his work which God had created and made ; although the blessing and sanctification, that is, the religious distinction and appropriation, of that day were not actually made till many



ages afterwards. The words do not assert, that God then blessed and sanctified the seventh day, but that he blessed and sanctified it for that reason ; and if any ask, why the Sabbath, or sanctification of the seventh day, was then mentioned, if it were not then appointed, the answer is at hand,—The order of connexion, and not of time, introduced the mention of the Sabbath in the history of the subject which it was ordained to commemorate.’

“That the Hebrew historian, in the passage here referred to, uses a prolepsis or anticipation, and alludes to the Mosaical institution of the Sabbath, is maintained by some of the ancient Fathers, by Waehner, Heidegger, Beausobre, by Le Clerc, Rosenmüller, Geddes, Dawson, and other commentators, and by the general stream of those writers who regard the Sabbath as peculiar to the Jews. Yet this opinion is built upon the assumption, that the Book of Genesis was not written till after the giving of the law ; which may be the fact, but of which most unquestionably there is no proof. But waving this consideration, it is scarcely possible to conceive a greater violence to the sacred text than is offered by this interpretation. It attributes to the inspired author the absurd assertion, that God rested on the seventh day from all his works which he had made, and therefore, about two thousand five hundred years after, God blessed and sanctified the seventh day. It may be as well imagined that God had finished his work on the seventh day, but rested on some other seventh day, as that he rested the day following the work of creation, and afterwards blessed and sanctified another. Not the slightest evidence appears for believing that Moses followed ‘the order of connexion, and not of time ;’ for no reasonable motive can be assigned for then introducing the mention of it, if it was not then appointed. The design of the sacred historian clearly is, to give a faithful account of the origin of the world ; and both the resting on the seventh day, and the blessing it, have too close a connexion to be separated : If the one took place immediately after the work of creation was concluded, so did the other. To the account of the production of the universe, the whole narrative is confined ; there is no intimation of subse-

quent events, nor the most distant allusion to Jewish ceremonies ; and it would be most astonishing if the writer deserted his grand object to mention one of the Hebrew ordinances which was not appointed till ages afterwards.

“ But according to Dr. Geddes, the opinion of a prolepsis derives some confirmation from the original Hebrew, which he renders, ‘ On the sixth day God completed all the work which he had to do ; and, on the seventh day, ceased from doing any of his works. God, therefore, blessed the seventh day, and made it holy because on it he ceased from all his works, which he had ordained to do.’ This version, he says, is ‘ in the supposition that the writer refers to the Jewish Sabbath :’ Of course it was designedly adapted to an hypothesis ; but, notwithstanding this suspicious circumstance, it is not easy to determine how it differs in sense from the received translation, as it leaves the question entirely undecided when this blessing and sanctification took place. The proposed version, however, is opposed by those in the Polyglott, and by the generality of translators, who render the particle *vau* at the beginning of the third verse, as a copulative, not as an illative ; and it is surprising how a sound Hebrew scholar can translate it otherwise. In short, nothing can be more violent and unnatural than the proleptical interpretation ; and if we add, that it rests upon the unproved assumption, that the record in question was written after the delivery of the law, it must appear so devoid of critical support, as not to require a moment’s hesitation in rejecting it.”\*

So satisfactorily does it appear that the institution of the Sabbath is historically narrated in Genesis ; and it follows from thence, that the law of the Sabbath is universal, and not peculiar to the Jews. God blessed and sanctified it, not certainly for himself, but for his creatures ; that it might be a day of special blessing to them, and be set apart, not only from unholy acts, (for they are forbidden on every day,) but from common uses. It was thus stamped with a hallowed character from the commencement, and in works of a hallowed character ought it therefore to be employed.

\* Holden On the Sabbath.

The obligation of a sabbatical observance upon Christians being thus established, the inquiry which naturally follows is, In what manner is this great festival, at once so ancient and so venerable, and intended to commemorate events so illustrious and so important to mankind, to be celebrated? Many have spoken of the difficulty of settling rules of this kind; but this will ordinarily vanish, if we consent to be guided fully by the principles of Scripture.

We allow that it requires judgment, and prudence, and charity, and, above all, a mind well-disposed to the spiritual employment of the Sabbath, to make a right application of the law. But this is the case with other precepts also; such, for instance, as the loving our neighbour as ourselves; with respect to which we seldom hear any complaint of difficulty in the application. But even if some want of special direction should be felt, this can only affect minor details; and probably the matter has been so left by the Lawgiver, to "try us, and prove us, and to know what is in our heart." Something may have been reserved in this case for the exercise of spontaneous obedience; for that generous construction of the precept which will be dictated by devotion and gratitude; and for the operation of a feeling of indignant shame, that the only day which God has reserved to himself should be grudged to him, and trenched upon by every petty excuse of convenience, interest, or sloth, and pared down, and negotiated for, in the spirit of one who seeks to overreach another. Of this we may be assured, that he who is most anxious to find exceptions to the general rule will, in most cases, be a defaulter upon even his own estimate of the general duty.

The only real difficulties with which men have entangled themselves, have arisen from the want of clear and decided views of the law of the Sabbath as it is a matter of express revelation. There are two extremes, either of which must be fertile of perplexity. The first is, to regard the Sabbath as a prudential institution, adopted by the primitive church, and resting upon civil and ecclesiastical authority; a notion which has been above refuted. For if this theory be adopted, it is impossible to find satisfactory rules, either in the Old or New

Testament, applicable to the subject ; and we may therefore cease to wonder at that variety of opinions, and those vacillations between duty and license, which have been found in different churches, and among their theological writers. The difficulty of establishing any rule at all, to which conscience is strictly amenable, is then evident, and indeed entirely insuperable ; and men in vain attempt to make a partial Sabbath by their own authority, when they reject “ the day which the Lord hath made.” If, on the other hand, a proper distinction is not preserved between the moral law of the Jews, which re-enacts the still more ancient institution of the Sabbath, (a law we have seen to be obligatory upon all Christians, to the end of time,) and the political and ceremonial law of the people, which contains particular rules as to the observance of the Sabbath ; fixing both the day on which it was to be held, viz., the seventh of the week, and issuing certain prohibitions not applicable to all people ; which branch of the Mosaic law was brought to an end by Christ,—difficulties will arise from this quarter. One difficulty will respect the day ; another the hour of the diurnal circle from which the Sabbath must commence. Other difficulties will arise from the inconvenience or impossibility of accommodating the Judaical precepts to countries and manners totally dissimilar ; and others from the degree of civil delinquency and punitiveness with which violations of the Sabbath ought to be marked in a Christian state. The kindling of fires in their dwellings, for instance, was forbidden to the Jews ; but for extending this to harsher climates, there is no authority. This rule would make the Sabbath a day of bodily suffering, and, in some cases, of danger to health, which is inconsistent with that merciful and festival character which the Sabbath was designed every where to bear. The same observation may apply to the cooking of victuals, which was also prohibited to the Jews, by express command. To the gathering of sticks on the Sabbath the penalty of death was assigned, on one occasion, for reasons probably arising out of the theocratical government of the Jews ; but surely this is no precedent for making the violation of the Sabbath a capital crime in the code of a Christian country.

Between the Decalogue, and the political and ceremonial laws which followed, there is a marked distinction. They were given at two different times, and in a different manner; and, above all, the former is referred to in the New Testament as of perpetual obligation; the other as peculiar, and as abolished by Christ. It does not follow, however, from this, that those precepts in the Levitical code which relate to the Sabbath are of no use to us. They show us how the general law was carried into its detail of application by the great Legislator, who condescended to be at once a civil and an ecclesiastical Governor of a chosen people; and though they are not in all respects binding upon us, in their full form, they all embody general interpretations of the fourth command of the Decalogue, to which, as far as they are applicable to a people otherwise circumstanced, respect is reverently and devoutly to be had. The prohibition to buy and sell on the Sabbath is as applicable to us as to the Jews; so is that against travelling on the Sabbath except for purposes of religion, which was allowed to them also. If we may lawfully kindle fires in our dwellings, yet we may learn, from the law peculiar to the Jews, to keep domestic services under restraint; if we may cook victuals for necessity and comfort, we are to be restrained from feasting; if violations of the Sabbath are not to be made capital crimes by Christian Governors, the enforcement of a decent external observance of the rest of the Sabbath is a lawful use of power, and a part of the duty of a Christian Magistrate.

But the rules by which the observance of the Sabbath is clearly explained, will be found in abundant copiousness and evidence in the original command; in the Decalogue; in incidental passages of Scripture, which refer not so much to the political law of the Jews, as to the universal moral code; and in the discourses and acts of Christ, and his Apostles: So that, independent of the Levitical code, we have abundant guidance. It is a day of rest from worldly pursuits; a day sanctified, that is, set apart for holy uses, which are the proper and the only lawful occupations of the day; it is a day of public worship, or, as it is expressed in the Mosaic law, "of holy convocation," or assembly;—a day for the exercise of mercy to man and beast;

—a day for the devout commemoration, by religious acts and meditations, of the creation and redemption of the world ; and, consequently, for the cultivation of that spirit which is suitable to such exercises, by laying aside all worldly cares and pleasures ; to which holy exercises there is to be a full appropriation of the seventh part of our time ; necessary sleep, and engagements of real necessity, as explained by our Saviour, only being excluded.

Works of charity and mercy were not excluded by the rigour of the Mosaic law, much less by the Christian dispensation. The rule of doing good on the Sabbath-day has, however, sometimes been interpreted with too much laxity, without considering that such acts form no part of the reason for which that day was sanctified, and that they are, therefore, to be grounded upon the necessity of immediate exertion. The secularity connected with certain public charities, has often been pushed beyond this rule of necessity, and as such has become unlawful.

The reason generally given for this, is, that men cannot be found to give time on the week-day to the management of such charities : And they will never be found, whilst the rule is brought down to convenience. Men's principles are to be raised, and not the command lowered. And when Ministers perseveringly do their duty, and but a few conscientious persons support them, the whole will be found practicable and easy. Charities are pressed either upon our feelings or our interests, and sometimes on both ; and when they become really urgent, time will be found for their management, without "robbing God," and laying down that most debasing of all principles, that our sacrifices are to cost us nothing. The teaching of writing in Sunday-schools has been pleaded for on the same assumed ground of necessity ; but in all well and religiously conducted institutions of this kind, it has been found quite practicable to accomplish the object in a lawful manner ; and even if it had not, there was no obligation binding as to that practice equal to that which binds us to obey the law of God. It is a work which comes not under any of our Lord's exceptions : It may be a benevolent thing ; but it has in it no

character of mercy, either to the bodies or to the souls of men.

As to amusements and recreations, which, when innocent, that is, we suppose, not immoral, are sometimes pleaded for by persons who advocate the serious observance of the Lord's day, but a few words are necessary. If to public worship we are to add a more than ordinary attention to the duties of the family and the closet, which all such persons allow, then there is little time for recreation and amusement; and if there were, the heart which is truly impressed with duties so sacred, and has entered into their spirit, can have no relish for them. Against every temptation of this kind, the words of the pious Archbishop Daves may serve as a salutary admonition:—

“Dost thou require of me, O Lord, but one day in seven for thy more especial service, when as all my times, all my days, are thy due tribute, and shall I grudge thee that one day? Have I but one day in the week, a peculiar season of nurturing and training up my soul for heavenly happiness, and shall I think the whole of this too much, and judge my duties at an end when the public offices of the church are only ended? Ah! where, in such a case, is my zeal, my sincerity, my constancy, and perseverance of holy obedience? Where my love unto, my delight and relish in, pious performances? Would those that are thus but half Christians be content to be half saved? Would those who are thus not far from the kingdom of heaven, be willing to be utterly excluded thence for arriving no nearer to a due observance of the Lord's day? Am I so afraid of sabbatizing with the Jews, that I carelessly omit keeping the day as a good Christian? Where can be the harm of overdoing in God's worship, suppose I could overdo? But when my Saviour has told me, after I have done all, I am still an unprofitable servant, where is the hazard, where the possibility, of doing too much? whereas in doing too little, in falling short of performing a due obedience on the Sabbath, I may also fall short of eternal life.”

## CHAPTER IV.

### *Morals :—Duties to our Neighbour.*

WHEN our duty to others is summed up in the general epitome of the second table, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;” although love must be so taken as to include many other principles and acts, yet we are thereby taught the source from which they truly spring, when performed evangelically, and also that universal charity is to be the habitual and reigning affection of the heart, in all our relations to our fellow-creatures.

This affection is to be considered in its source.

That source is a regenerated state of mind. We have shown that the love of God springs from the gift of the Holy Ghost to those who are justified by faith in Christ; and that every sentiment which, in any other circumstances, assumes this designation, is imperfect or simulated. We make the same remark as to the love of our neighbour. It is an imperfect or simulated sentiment, if it flow not from the love of God, the sure mark of a regenerate nature. We here also see the superior character of Christian morals, and of morals when kept in connexion, as they ought always to be, with the doctrines of the Gospel, and their operation in the heart. There may, indeed, be a degree of natural benevolence; the indirect influence of a benevolent nature may counteract the selfish and the malevolent feelings; and education, when well directed, will come in to the aid of nature. Yet the principle, as a religious one, and in its full operation, can only result from a supernatural change of our nature, because that only can subdue those affections which counteract benevolence and charity in their efficient and habitual manifestations.

This affection is also to be considered in respect of what it excludes.

It excludes all anger beyond that degree of resentment



which a culpable action in another may call forth, in order to mark the sense we entertain of its evil, and to impress that evil upon the offender, so that we may lead him to repent of it, and forsake it. This seems the proper rule by which to distinguish lawful anger from that which is contrary to charity, and therefore malevolent and sinful. It excludes implacability; for if we do not promptly and generously forgive others their trespasses, this is deemed to be so great a violation of that law of love which ought to bind men together, that our heavenly Father will not forgive us. It excludes all revenge; so that we are to exact no punishment of another for offences against ourselves: And though it be lawful to call in the penalties of the laws for crimes against society, yet this is never to be done on the principle of private revenge; but on the public ground, that law and government are ordained of God, which produces a case that comes under the inspired rule, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." It excludes all prejudice; by which is meant a harsh construction of men's motives and characters upon surmise, or partial knowledge of the facts, accompanied with an inclination to form an ill opinion of them in the absence of proper evidence. This appears to be what the Apostle Paul means, when he says, "Charity thinketh no evil." It excludes all censoriousness or evil-speaking, when the end is not the correction of the offender, or when a declaration of the truth as to one person is not required by our love and duty to another; for whenever the end is merely to lower a person in the estimation of others, it is resolvable solely into a splenetic and immoral feeling. It excludes all those aggressions, whether petty or more weighty, which may be made upon the interests of another, when the law of the case, or even the abstract right, might not be against our claim. These are always complex cases, and can but occasionally occur; but the rule which binds us to do unto others as we would they should do unto us, binds us to act upon the benevolent view of the case, and to forego the rigidness of right. Finally, it excludes, as limitations to its exercise, all those artificial distinctions which have been created by mer, or by providential arrangements, or by accidental cir-

cumstances. Men of all nations, of all colours, of all conditions, are the objects of the unlimited precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Kind feelings produced by natural instincts, by intercourse, by country, may call the love of our neighbour into warmer exercise as to individuals or classes of men, or these may be considered as distinct and special, though similar affections superadded to this universal charity; but as to all men, this charity is an efficient affection, excluding all ill-will, and all injury.

But its active expression remains to be considered.

It is not a merely negative affection; but it brings forth rich and varied fruits. It produces a feeling of delight in the happiness of others, and thus destroys envy; it is the source of sympathy and compassion; it opens the hand in liberality for the supply of the wants of others; it gives cheerfulness to every service undertaken in the cause of others; it resists the wrong which may be inflicted upon them; and it will run hazards of health and life for their sakes. It has special respect to the spiritual interests and salvation of men; and thus it instructs, persuades, reproves the ignorant and vicious; counsels the simple; comforts the doubting and perplexed; and rejoices in those gifts and graces of others by which society may be enlightened and purified. The zeal of Apostles, the patience of martyrs, the travels and labours of Evangelists in the first ages, were all animated by this affection; and the earnestness of Preachers in all ages, and the more private labours of Christians for the benefit of the souls of men, with the operations of those voluntary associations which send forth Missionaries to the Heathen, or distribute Bibles and tracts, or conduct schools, are all its visible expressions before the world. A principle of philanthropy may be conceived to exist independent of the influence of active and efficient Christianity; but it has always expended itself either in good wishes, or, at most, in feeble efforts, chiefly directed to the mitigation of a little temporary external evil. Except in connexion with religion, and that the religion of the heart, wrought and maintained there by the acknowledged influences of the Holy Spirit, the love of mankind has

never exhibited itself under such views and acts as those we have just referred to. It has never been found in characters naturally selfish and obdurate; has never disposed men to make great and painful sacrifices for others; never sympathized with spiritual wretchedness; never been called forth into its highest exercises by considerations drawn from the immortal relations of man to eternity; never originated large plans for the illumination and moral culture of society; never fixed upon the grand object to which it is now bending the hearts, the interests, and hopes, of the universal church, the conversion of the world. Philanthropy, in systems of mere ethics, like their love of God, is a greatly inferior principle to that which is enjoined by Christianity, and infused by its influence;—another proof of the folly of separating morals from revealed truth, and of the necessity of cultivating them upon evangelical principles.

The same conclusion will be established, if we consider those works of mercy which the principle of universal philanthropy will dictate, and which form a large portion of our duty to our neighbour. It is more the design of this part of the present work, to exhibit the peculiar nature and perfection of the morals of Christianity, than to consider moral duties in detail; and, therefore, it is only necessary to assume what is obvious to all, that the exercise of practical mercy to the needy and miserable is a moral duty clearly revealed, including also the application of a part of our property to benefit mankind in other respects, as we have opportunity. But let us ask, Under what rules can the quantum of our exertions in doing good to others be determined, except by the authority of revealed religion? It is clear that there is an antagonist principle of selfishness in man, which counteracts our charities; and that the demands of personal gratification, and of family interests, and of show and expense in our modes of living, are apt to take up so large a share of what remains after our necessities, and the lawful demands of station, and a prudent provision for old age and for our families after our decease, are met, that a very small portion is wont to be considered as lawfully disposable, under all these considerations,

for purposes of general beneficence. If we have no rules or principles, it is clear that the most limited efforts may pass for very meritorious acts ; or that they will be left to be measured only by the different degrees of natural compassion in man, or by some immoral principle, such as the love of human praise. There is nothing in any mere system of morals to direct in such cases ; certainly nothing to compel either the principles or the heart. Here, then, we shall see also in how different a predicament this interesting branch of morality stands, when kept in close and inseparable connexion with Christianity. It is true, that we have no specific rule as to the quantum of our givings in the Scriptures ; and the reason of this is not inapparent. Such a rule must have been branched out into an inconvenient number of detailed directions to meet every particular case ; it must have respected the different and changing states of society and civilization ; it must have controlled men's savings as well as givings, because the latter are dependent upon them ; it must have prescribed modes of dress, and modes of living ; all which would have left cases still partially touched or wholly unprovided for, and the multiplicity of rules might have been a trap to our consciences, rather than the means of directing them. There is also a more general reason for this omission. The exercise of mercy is a work of the affections ; it must have, therefore, something free and spontaneous in it ; and it was designed to be voluntary, that the moral effect produced upon society might be to bind men together in a softer bond, and to call forth reciprocally good affections. To this the stern character of particular laws would have been inimical. Christianity teaches mercy, by general principles, which at once sufficiently direct, and leave to the heart the free play of its affections.

The general law is express and unequivocal : "As ye have opportunity do good unto all men, and especially to them that are of the household of faith." "To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." A most important and influential principle, to be found in no mere system of ethics, is also contained in the revelation of a particular relation in which we all stand to God, and on which

we must be judged at the last day : We are stewards, servants, to whom the great Master has committed his goods, to be used according to his directions. We have nothing, therefore, of our own, no right in property, except under the conditions on which it is committed to us ; and we must give an account for our use of it according to the rule. A rule of proportion is also in various passages of Scripture expressly laid down : “ Where little is given, little is required ; where much is given, much is required.” “ For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not.” It is a further rule, that our charities should be both cheerful and abundant : “ See that ye abound in this grace also ;” “ not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver.” These general rules and principles being laid down, the appeal is made to the heart, and men are left to the influence of the spiritual and grateful affections excited there. All the venerable examples of Scripture are brought to bear upon the free and liberal exercises of beneficence, crowned with the example of our Saviour : “ Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich.” An appeal is made to man’s gratitude for the blessings of Providence to himself, and he is enjoined to give “ as the Lord hath prospered him.” Our fellow-creatures are constantly presented to us under tender relations, as our “ brethren ;” or, more particularly, as “ of the household of faith.” Special promises are made of God’s favour and blessing, as the reward of such acts in the present life : “ And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work ;” and, finally, although every notion of merit is excluded, yet the rewards of eternity are represented as to be graciously dispensed, so as specially to distinguish and honour every “ work of faith and labour of love.” Under so powerful an authority, so explicit a general directory, and so effectual an excitement is this branch of morality placed by the Gospel.

As our religion enjoins charity, so also it prescribes justice.

As a mutual dependence has been established among men, so also there are mutual rights, in the rendering of which to each other, justice, when considered as a social virtue, consists.

Various definitions and descriptions of justice are found among moralists and jurists, of different degrees of importance and utility to those who write, and to those who study, formal treatises on its collective or separate branches. The distribution of justice into ethical, economical, and political, is more suited to our purpose, and is sufficiently comprehensive. The first considers all mankind as on a level ; the second regards them as associated into families, under the several relations of husband and wife, parents and children, masters and servants ; and the third comprehends them as united into public states, and obliged to certain duties, either as Magistrates or people. On all these the rules of conduct in Scripture are explicit and forcible.

Ethical justice, as it considers mankind as on a level, chiefly, therefore, respects what are usually called men's "natural" rights, which are briefly summed up in three,—life, property, and liberty.

The natural right to life is guarded by the precept, "Thou shalt not kill ;" and it is also limited by the more ancient injunction to the sons of Noah, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." In a state of society, indeed, this right may be further limited by a government, and capital punishments be extended to other crimes, (as we see in the Mosaic law,) provided the law be equally binding on all offenders, and rest upon the necessity of the case, as determined by the good of the whole community ; and also that in every country professing Christianity, the merciful as well as the righteous character of that religion be suffered to impress itself upon its legislation. But against all individual authority the life of man is absolutely secured ; and not only so, but anger, which is the first principle of violence, and which proceeds first to malignity and revenge, and then to personal injuries, is prohibited, under the penalty of divine wrath ;—a lofty proof of the superior character of the Christian rule of justice.

In property, lawfully acquired, that is, acquired without injury to others, every man has also a natural right. This right also may be restrained in society without injustice, seeing it is but the price which every man pays for protection, and other advantages of the social state ; but here also the necessity of the case, resting upon the benefit of the community, is to be the rule of this modification of the natural claim. The law too must lie equally upon all, *cæteris paribus* ; and every individual whose right of property is thus interfered with must have his due share of the common advantage. Against individual aggression the right of property is secured by the divine law, “Thou shalt not steal ;” and by another law which carries the restraint up to the very principle of justice in the heart, “Thou shalt not covet ;” covetousness being that corrupt affection from which injuries done to others in their property arise. The Christian injunction, to be “content with such things as we have,” is another important security. The rule which binds rulers and governments in their interferences with this natural right of property comes under the head of “political justice.”

Liberty is another natural right, which, by individual authority, at least, cannot be interfered with. Hence man-stealing, the object of which is to reduce another to slavery, by obtaining forcible possession of his person, and compelling his labour, is ranked with crimes of the greatest magnitude in the New Testament ; and against it the special vengeance of God is threatened. By the Jewish law, also, it was punished with death. How far the natural right which every man has to his own liberty may, like the natural right to property, be restrained by public authority, is a point on which different opinions have been held. Prisoners of war were formerly considered to be absolute captives, the right of which claim is involved in the question of the right of war. Where one can be justified, so may the other ; since a surrender of the person in war is the commutation of liberty for life. In the more humane practice of modern warfare, an exchange of prisoners is effected ; but even this supposes an acquired right on each side in the prisoners, and a commutation by an exchange.

Should the progeny of such prisoners of war, doomed as by ancient custom to perpetual servitude, be also kept in slavery, and the purchase of slaves also be practised, the question which then arises is one which tries the whole case of slavery, as far as public law is concerned. Among the Patriarchs there was a mild species of domestic servitude, distinct from that of captives of war. Among the Jews, a Hebrew might be sold for debt, or sell himself when poor, but only till the year of release. After that, his continuance in a state of slavery was perfectly voluntary. The Jews might, however, hold foreigners as slaves for life. Michaëlis has well observed, that, by the restrictions of his law, Moses remarkably mitigated the rigours of slavery. "This is, as it were, the spirit of his laws respecting it. He appears to have regarded it as a hardship, and to have disapproved of its severities. Hence we find him, in Deuteronomy xxiii. 15, 16, ordaining that no foreign servant, who sought for refuge among the Israelites, should be delivered up to his master."\* This view of the case, we may add, will probably afford the reason why slavery was at all allowed under the Jewish dispensation. The general state of society in the surrounding nations might perhaps render it a necessary evil; but in other countries it existed in forms harsh and oppressive, whilst the merciful nature of the Mosaic institute impressed upon it a mild and mitigated character, in recognition of man's natural rights, and as an example to other countries. And to show how great a contrast with our modern colonial slavery, the case of slaves among the Jews presented, we may remark, that all foreign slaves were circumcised, and therefore initiated into the true religion; that they had the full and strict advantage of the Sabbath confirmed to them by express statute; that they had access to the solemn religious festivals of the Jews, and partook of the feasts made upon the offerings; that they could possess property, as appears from Leviticus xxv. 49, and 2 Samuel ix. 10; and that all the fruits which grew spontaneously during the Sabbatical year were given to them and to the indigent. Michaëlis has also showed, that not only was the ox not

\* Commentaries on the Laws of Moses.



muzzled when treading out the corn, but that the slaves and day-labourers might eat without restraint of the fruits they were gathering in their master's service, and drink of the wine they pressed from the wine-press.\* The Jewish law may, therefore, be considered not so much as controlling the natural right which man has to liberty, and so authorizing the infraction of that right under certain circumstances, but as coming in to regulate and to soften a state of things already existing, and grown into general practice. All, therefore, that can be fairly inferred from the existence of slavery under that law, is, that a Legislature, in certain cases, may be justified in mitigating, rather than abolishing, that evil. But even here, since the Legislator was in fact God, whose right to dispose of his creatures cannot be questioned, and since also the nations neighbouring to the Jews were under a malediction because of their idolatries, the Jewish law can be no rule to a Christian state; and all arguments drawn from it in favour of perpetual slavery suppose that a mere earthly Legislature is invested with the powers and prerogatives of the divine Legislator of the Jews, —which of course vitiates the whole reasoning.

As to the existence of slavery in Christian states, every government, as soon as it professes to be Christian, binds itself to be regulated by the principles of the New Testament; and though a part of its subjects should at that time be in a state of servitude, and their sudden emancipation might be obviously an injury to society at large, it is bound to show that its spirit and tendency are as inimical to slavery as is the Christianity which it professes. All the injustice and oppression against which it can guard that condition, and all the mitigating regulations it can adopt, are obligatory upon it; and since also every Christian slave is enjoined by apostolic authority to choose freedom, when it is possible to attain it, as being a better state and more befitting a Christian man, so is every Christian master bound, by the principle of loving his neighbour, and more especially his “brother in Christ,” as himself, to promote his passing into that better and more Christian

\* Commentaries on the Laws of Moses, Art. 130.

state. To the instruction of the slaves in religion would every such Christian government also be bound, and still farther to adopt measures for the final extinction of slavery ; the rule of its proceeding in this case being the accomplishment of this object as soon as is compatible with the real welfare of the enslaved portion of its subjects themselves, and not the consideration of the losses which might be sustained by their proprietors, which, however, ought to be compensated by other means, as far as they are just, and equitably estimated.

If this be the mode of proceeding clearly pointed out by Christianity to a state on its first becoming Christian, when previously and for ages the practice of slavery had grown up with it ; how much more forcibly does it impose its obligation upon nations involved in the guilt of the modern African slavery. They professed Christianity when they commenced the practice. They entered upon a traffic which *ab initio* was, upon their own principles, unjust and cruel. They had no rights of war to plead against the natural rights of the first captives ; who were in fact stolen, or purchased from the stealers, knowing them to be so. The governments themselves never acquired any right of property in the parents ; they have none in their descendants, and can acquire none ; as the thief who steals cattle cannot, should he feed and defend them, acquire any right of property, either in them or the stock they may produce, although he should be at the charge of rearing them. These governments not having a right of property in their colonial slaves, could not transfer any right of property in them to their present masters, for they could not give what they never had ; nor, by their connivance at the robberies and purchases of stolen human beings, alter the essential injustice of the transaction. All such governments are therefore clearly bound, as they fear God and dread his displeasure, to restore all their slaves to the condition of free men. Restoration to their friends and country is now out of the question ; they are bound to protect them where they are, and have the right to exact their obedience to good laws in return ; but property in them they cannot obtain, their natural right to liberty is untouched and

inviolable. The manner in which this right is to be restored, we grant, is in the power of such governments to determine, provided that proceeding be regulated by the principles above laid down : First, that the emancipation be sincerely determined upon, at some time future : Secondly, that it be not delayed beyond the period which the general interest of the slaves themselves prescribes, and which is to be judged of benevolently, and without any bias of judgment, giving the advantage of every doubt to the injured party : Thirdly, that all possible means be adopted to render freedom a good to them. It is only under such circumstances that the continuance of slavery among us can cease to be a national sin, calling down, as it has done, and must do until a process of emancipation be honestly commenced, the just displeasure of God. What compensations may be justly claimed from the governments, that is, the public, of those countries who have entangled themselves in this species of unjust dealing, by those who have purchased men and women whom no one had the right to sell, and no one had the right to buy, is a perfectly distinct question, and ought not to turn repentance and justice out of their course, or delay their operations for a moment. Perhaps, such is the unfruitful nature of all wrong, that it may be found, that, as free labourers, the slaves would be of equal or more value to those who employ them, than at present. If otherwise, as in some degree "all have sinned," the real loss ought to be borne by all, when that loss is fairly and impartially ascertained ; but of which loss, the slave-interest, if we may so call it, ought in justice to bear more than an equal share, as having had the greatest gain.

The rules of Christian justice thus secure the three great natural rights of man ; but it may be inquired, whether he has himself the power of surrendering them at his own option.

And, first, with respect to life.

Since government is an institution of God, it seems obligatory upon all men to live in a social state ; and, if so, to each is conceded the right of putting his life to hazard, when called upon by his government to defend that state from domestic rebellion or foreign war. So also we have the power to hazard

our lives to save a fellow-creature from perishing. In times of persecution for religion, we are enjoined by our Lord to flee from one city to another ; but when flight is cut off, we have the power to surrender life rather than betray our allegiance to Christ. According to the Apostle's rule, "we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren ;" that is, for the church and the cause of religion. In this case, and in some others, accompanied with danger to life, when a plain rule of duty is seen to be binding upon us, we are not only at liberty to take the risk, but are bound to do it ; since it is more our duty to obey God than to take care of our health and life. These instances of devotion have been by some writers called "suicides of duty," a phrase which may well be dispensed with, although the sentiment implied in it is correct.

On suicide, properly so called, that is, self-murder, our modern moralists have added little to what is advanced by the ethical writers of Greece and Rome, to prove its unlawfulness ; for, though suicide was much practised in those ancient states, and sometimes commended, especially by the Stoics, it was occasionally condemned. "We men," says Plato, "are all by the appointment of God in a certain prison or custody, which we ought not to break out of, or run away." So likewise Cicero : "God, the supreme Governor of all things, forbids us to depart hence without his order. All pious men ought to have patience to continue in the body, as long as God shall please who sent us hither ; and not force themselves out of the world before he calls for them, lest they be found deserters of the station appointed them by God."

This is the reasoning which has generally satisfied our moralists on this subject, with the exception of some infidel sophists, and two or three writers of paradoxes in the established Church, who have defended suicide, or affected to do so. Paley has added some other considerations, drawn from his doctrine of general tendency, and from the duties which are deserted, the injuries brought upon others, &c. ; but the whole only shows, that merely ethical reasoning furnishes only a feeble barrier against this offence against God, against society, and against ourselves, independent of the holy Scrip-

tures. There the prohibitions of a divine law lie directly against this act, and also the whole spirit of that economy under which we are placed by Almighty God.

It is very true that, in the Old Testament history, we have a few instances of suicide among the Jews, which were not marked by any penal visitation, as among modern nations, upon the remains of the deceased; such as the denial of honourable sepulture, &c. But this arose from the absence of all penalty in such cases in the Mosaic law. In this there was great reason; for the subject himself is by his own direful act put beyond the reach of human visitation; and every dishonour done to the inanimate corse is only punishment inflicted upon the innocent survivors, who, in most cases, have a large measure of suffering already entailed upon them. This was probably the humane reason for the silence of the Mosaic law as to the punishment of suicide.

But, as the law of the two tables is of general moral obligation, although a part also of the municipal law of the Jews; as it concerned them as creatures, as well as subjects of the theocracy; it takes cognizance of acts not merely as prejudicial to society, but as offensive to God, and in opposition to his will as the Ruler of the world. The precept, therefore, "Thou shalt not kill," must be taken to forbid not only murder, properly so called, which is a crime against society, to be reached by human penalties, but also self-destruction, which, though a crime also in a lower degree against society, no human penalties can visit, but is left, since the offender is out of the reach of man, wholly to the retribution of God. The absence of all *post mortem* penalties against suicide in the Mosaic law, is no proof, therefore, that it is not included in the prohibition, "Thou shalt not kill," any more than the absence of all penalties in the same law against a covetous disposition, proves any thing against the precept, "Thou shalt not covet," being interpreted to extend to the heart of man, although violences, thefts, and other instances of covetousness, in action only, are restrained in the Mosaic law by positive penalties. Some have urged it, however, as a great absurdity, to allege this commandment as a prohibition of suicide. "When a Christian

moralist," says Dr. Whately, "is called on for a direct scriptural precept against suicide, instead of replying that the Bible is not meant for a complete code of laws, but for a system of motives and principles, the answer frequently given is, 'Thou shalt do no murder.' Suicide, if any one considers the nature, and not the name of it, (self-murder,) evidently wants the essential characteristic of murder, namely, the hurt and injury done to one's neighbour, in depriving him of life, as well as to others by the insecurity they are in consequence liable to feel."\* All this might be correct enough, but for one error into which the writer has fallen,—that of assuming that the precept is, "Thou shalt do no murder;" for if that were the term used in the strict sense, we need not be told that suicide is not murder, which is only saying, that the killing one's self is not the killing another. The authorized translation uses the word "kill," "Thou shalt not kill," as better rendering the Hebrew word, which has a similar latitude of meaning, and is used to express fortuitous homicide, and the act of depriving of life generally, as well as murder properly so called. That the prohibition respects the killing of others with criminal intent, all agree; and Moses describes (Num. xxxv. 16, &c.) the circumstances which make that killing so criminal as to be punishable with death; but that he included the different kinds of homicide within the prohibition, is equally certain, because the Mosaic law takes cognizance of homicide, and provides for the due examination of its circumstances by the Judges, and recognises the custom of the Goel, or avenging of blood, and provides cities of refuge for the homicide; a provision which, however merciful, left the incautious manslayer subject to risks and inconveniences which had the nature of penalties. So tender was this law of the life of man! Moses, however, as a legislator, applying this great moral table of laws to practical legislation, could not extend the penalties under this prohibition further than to these two cases, because in cases of suicide the offender is out of the reach of human power; but, as we see the precept extended

\* *Elements of Logic.*

beyond the case of murder with criminal intention, to homicide, and that the word used in the prohibition, "Thou shalt not kill," is so indefinite as to comprehend every act by which man is deprived of life, when it has no authority from God ; it has been very properly extended by Divines and scriptural moralists, not only to homicide, but from that to suicide. This, indeed, appears to be its import,—that it prohibits the taking away of human life in all cases, without authority from God, which authority he has lodged with human governments, the "powers ordained by him" for the regulation of mankind, in what relates to the peace and welfare of society ; and, whenever the life of man is taken away, except in cases sanctioned by human governments, proceeding upon the rules and principles of the word of God, then the precept, "Thou shalt not kill," is directly violated. Dr. Whately, in the passage above adverted to, objects to suicide being called "self-murder," because this criminal act has not the qualities of that by which the life of another is intentionally and maliciously taken away ; but if the deliberate and intentional deprivation of another of life, without authority from the divine law, and from human laws established upon it, be that which, in fact, constitutes murder, then is suicide entitled to be branded with the same odious appellation. The circumstances must, of necessity, differ ; but the act itself has essentially the same criminality, though not in the same degree,—it is the taking away of the life of a human being, without the authority of God, the Maker and Proprietor of all, and therefore in opposition to, and defiance of, his authority. That suicide has very deservedly received the morally descriptive appellation of self-murder, will also appear from the reason given, in the first prohibition against murder, for making this species of violence a capital crime. In the precepts delivered to the sons of Noah, and therefore, through them, to all their descendants, that is, to all mankind, that against murder is thus delivered, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed ; for in the image of God made he man." (Gen. ix. 6.) There is in this reason a manifest reference to the dignity put upon human nature, by its being endowed with a rational and immortal spirit. The crime of

murder is made to lie, therefore, not merely in the putting to death the animal part of man's nature, for this is merged in a higher consideration, which seems to be, the indignity done to the noblest of the works of God ; and particularly, the value of life to an immortal being, accountable in another state for the actions done in this, and which ought, for this very reason, to be specially guarded, since death introduces him into changeless and eternal relations, which were not to lie at the mercy of human passions. Such moralists as the writer above quoted would restrain the essential characteristics of an act of murder to the "hurt done to a neighbour in depriving him of life," and the "insecurity" inflicted upon society ; but in this ancient and universal law, it is made eminently to consist in contempt of the image of God in man, and its interference with man's immortal interests and relations as a deathless spirit ; and if so, then suicide bears upon it these deep and awful characteristics of murder. It is much more wisely said by Bishop Kidder, in his remarks upon this passage, that the reason given,—“for in the image of God made he man,”—is a further aggravation of the sin of murder. It is a great trespass upon God, as it destroys his likeness ; and self-murder, upon this account, is forbidden as well as the killing of others.

Whatever weight may be due to the considerations urged by the moralists above quoted against this crime,—and every motive which may deter men from listening to the first temptation to so direful an act, is important,—yet the guards of Christianity must be acknowledged to be of a more powerful kind. For the principles of our religion cannot be understood without our perceiving, that, of almost all other crimes, wilful suicide ought most to be dreaded. It is a sin against God's authority. He is “the God of our life ;” in “his hand our breath is ;” and we usurp his sovereignty when we presume to dispose of it. As resulting from the pressure of mortifications of spirit, or the troubles of life, it becomes a sin, as arraigning his providential wisdom and goodness. It implies either an atheistic denial of God's government, or a rebellious opposition to his permissive acts or direct appointments ; it cannot be committed, therefore, when the mind is sound, but in the



absence of all the Christian virtues, of humility, self-denial, patience, and the fear and love of God, and only under the influence of pride, worldliness, forgetfulness of God, and contempt of him. It hides from the mind the realities of a future judgment, or it defies them; and it is consummated by the character of unpardonableness, because it places the criminal at once beyond the reach of mercy.

If no man has the right, then, to dispose of his own life by suicide, he has no right to hazard it in duels. The silence of the pulpits in those quarters where only the warning voice of the Christian Preacher can be heard by that class of persons most addicted to this crime, is exceedingly disgraceful; for there can be little doubt that the palliating views of this practice taken by some ethical writers of celebrity, together with the loose reasonings of men of the world, have, from this neglect, exercised much influence upon many minds; and the consequence has been, that hundreds, in this professedly Christian country, have fallen victims to false notions of honour, and to imperfect notions of the obligations of their religion. Paley has the credit of dealing with this vice with greater decision than many of our moralists. He classes it very justly with murder. "Murder is forbidden; and wherever human life is deliberately taken away, otherwise than by public authority, there is murder."\* "If unauthorized laws of honour be allowed to create exceptions to divine prohibitions, there is an end to all morality, as founded in the will of the Deity; and the obligation of every duty may, at one time or other, be discharged by the caprice and fluctuations of fashion."† The fact is, that we must either renounce Christianity, or try all cases by its rule. The question of the lawfulness of duelling is thus promptly disposed of. If I have received a personal injury, I am bound to forgive it, unless it be of such a nature that it becomes a duty to punish it by due course of law; but even then not in the spirit of revenge, but out of respect to the peace and welfare of society. If I have given offence, I am bound to acknowledge it, and to make

\* Moral and Political Philosophy.

† Ibid.

reparation; and if my adversary will not be satisfied, and insists upon my staking my life against his own, no considerations of reputation or disgrace, the good or ill opinion of men who form their judgments in utter disregard to the laws of God, can have any more weight in this than in any other case of immorality. The sin of duelling unites, in fact, the two crimes of suicide and of murder. He who falls in a duel is guilty of suicide, by voluntarily exposing himself to be slain; he by whom he falls is guilty of murder, as having shed man's blood without authority. Nay, the guilt of the two crimes unites in the same person. He who falls is a suicide in fact, and the murderer of another in intention; he by whom he falls is a murderer in fact, and so far a suicide as to have put his own life into imminent peril, in contempt of God's authority over him. He has contemned the "image of God in man," both in himself and in his brother. And where duels are not fatal on either side, the whole guilt is chargeable upon the parties, as a sin purposed in the heart, although, in that case, there is space left for repentance.

Life, then, is not disposable at the option of man, nor is property itself, without respect to the rules of the divine law; and here, too, we shall perceive the feebleness of the considerations urged, in merely moral systems, to restrain prodigal and wasteful expenditure, hazardous speculations, and even the obvious evil of gambling. Many weighty arguments, we grant, may be drawn against all these from the claims of children, and near relations, whose interests we are bound to regard, and whom we can have no right to expose even to the chance of being involved in the same ruin with ourselves. But these reasons can have little sway with those who fancy that they can keep within the verge of extreme danger, and who will plead their natural right to do what they will with their own. In cases, too, where there may be no children or dependent relatives, the individual would feel less disposed to acknowledge the force of this class of reasons, or think them quite inapplicable to his case. But Christianity enjoins moderation of the desires, and temperance in the gratification of the appetites, and in the show and splendour of life, even

where a state of opulence can command them. It has its admonitions against the "love of money;" against "willing to be rich," except as "the Lord may prosper a man" in the usual track and course of honest industry,—authoritative cautions which lie directly against hazardous speculations; and it warns such as despise them of the consequent temptations and spiritual snares, destructive to habits of piety, and ultimately to the soul, into which they must fall,—considerations of vast moment, but peculiar to itself, and quite out of the range of those moral systems which have no respect to its authority. Against gambling, in its most innocent forms, it sets its injunction, "Redeeming the time;" and in its more aggravated cases, it opposes to it not only the above considerations, as it springs from an unhallowed love of money; but the whole of that spirit and temper which it makes to be obligatory upon us, and which those evil and often diabolical excitements, produced by this habit, so fearfully violate. Above all, it makes property a trust, to be employed under the rules prescribed by Him who, as sovereign Proprietor, has deposited it with us; which rules require its use certainly; (for the covetous are excluded from the kingdom of God;) but its use, first, for the supply of our wants, according to our station, with moderation; then, as a provision for children, and dependent relatives; finally, for purposes of charity and religion, in which grace, as before stated, it requires us to abound;—and it enforces all these by placing us under the responsibility of accounting to God himself, in person, for the abuse or neglect of this trust, at the general judgment.

With respect to the third natural right, that of liberty, it is a question which can seldom or never occur in the present state of society, whether a man is free to part with it for a valuable consideration. Under the law of Moses, this was certainly allowed; but a Christian man stands on different ground. To a Pagan he would not be at liberty to enslave himself, because he is not at liberty to put to hazard his soul's interests, which might be interfered with by the control given to a Pagan over his time and conduct. To a Christian he could not be at liberty to alienate himself, because, the

spirit of Christianity being opposed to slavery, the one is not at liberty to buy, nor the other to sell, for reasons before given. I conclude, therefore, that no man can lawfully divest himself absolutely of his personal liberty, for any consideration whatever.

To the natural rights of life, property, and liberty, may be added the right of conscience.

By this is meant the right which a man has to profess his own opinions on subjects of religion, and to worship God in the mode which he deems most acceptable to him. Whether this, however, be strictly a natural right, like the three above mentioned, may be a subject of dispute; for then it would be universal, which is, perhaps, carrying the point too far. The matter may best be determined by considering the ground of that right; which differs much from the others we have mentioned. The right to life results both from the appointment of God, and the absence of a superior or countervailing right in another to deprive us of it, until, at least, we forfeit that right to some third party, by some voluntary act of our own. This also applies to the rights of property and liberty. The right of professing particular religious opinions, and practising a particular mode of worship, can only rest upon a conviction that these are duties enjoined upon us by God. For since religion is a matter which concerns man and God, a man must know that it is obligatory upon him as a duty, and under fear of God's displeasure, to profess his opinions openly, and to practise some particular mode of worship.

To apply this to the case of persons all sincerely receiving the Bible as a revelation from God: Unquestionably it is a part of that revelation, that those who receive its doctrines should profess and attempt to propagate them; nor can they profess them in any other way than they interpret the meaning of the book which contains them. Equally clear is it, that the worship of God is enjoined upon man, and that publicly, and in collective bodies. From these circumstances, therefore, it results, that it is a duty which man owes to God, to profess and to endeavour to propagate his honest views of the meaning of the Scriptures, and to worship God in the mode which he

sincerely conceives is made obligatory upon him, by the sacred volume. It is from this duty that the right of conscience flows, and from this alone; and it thus becomes a right of that nature which no earthly power has any authority to obstruct, because it can have no power to alter or to destroy the obligations which Almighty God, the supreme Governor, has laid upon his creatures.

It does not, however, follow from this statement, that human governments, professing to be regulated themselves by the principles of Christianity, have no authority to take cognizance of the manner in which this right of conscience is exercised. They are "ordained of God" to uphold their subjects in the exercise of their just rights respectively, and that without partiality. If, therefore, under a plea of conscience, one sect should interfere to obstruct others in a peaceable profession of their opinions, and a peaceable exercise of their worship; or should exercise its own so as to be vexatiously intrusive upon others, and in defiance of some rival sect; as, for instance, in a Protestant country, if Roman Catholics were to carry the objects of their idolatry about the streets, instead of contenting themselves with worshipping in their own way in their own chapels;—in all such cases, the government might be bound, in respect of the rights of other classes of its subjects, to interfere by restraint; nor would it then trespass upon the rights of conscience, justly interpreted. Again: Since "the powers that be are ordained of God," for a "terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well," (which evil-doing and well-doing are to be interpreted according to the common sense and agreement of mankind, and plainly refer to moral actions only,) should any sect or individual, ignorantly, fanatically, or corruptly, so interpret the Scriptures as to suppose themselves free from moral obligation, and then proceed to practise their tenets by any such acts as violate the laws of well-ordered society, or by admitting indecencies into their modes of worship, as some fanatics in former times, who used to strip themselves naked in their assemblies; here too a government would have the right to disregard the plea of conscience if set up, and to restrain such acts, and the

teachers of them, as pernicious to society. But, however erroneous the opinions professed by any sect may be, and however zealously a sound and faithful Christian might be called by a sense of duty to denounce them as involving a corrupt conscience, or no conscience at all, and as dangerous or fatal to the salvation of those that hold them, if they do not interfere with the peace, the morals, and good order of society, it is not within the province of a Government to animadvert upon them by force of law ; since it was not established to judge of men's sincerity in religion, nor of the tendency of opinions as they affect their salvation, but only to uphold the morals and good order of the community. So, likewise, what has been called by some, "worship," has been sometimes marked with great excesses of enthusiasm, and with even ridiculous follies ; but if the peace of others, and the morals of society, are not thereby endangered, it is not the part of the magistracy to interfere, at least by authority.

In cases, however, where political opinions are connected with religious notions, and the plea of conscience is set up as an "unalienable right," to sanction their propagation ; a Government may be justified in interposing, not indeed on the ground that it judges the conscience to be erring and corrupt, but for its own just support when endangered by such opinions. Sects of religious republicans have sometimes appeared under a monarchical government,—the fifth-monarchy fanatics, for instance, who, according to their interpretation of the kingdom of Christ, regarded the existence of all earthly monarchies as inimical to it, and, believing that the period of its establishment was come, thought it impiety to acknowledge any earthly Sovereign, as being contrary to their allegiance to Christ. When such notions are confined to a few persons, it is wise in a Government to leave them to their own absurdities as their most potent cure ; but should a fanaticism of this kind seize upon a multitude, and render them restless and seditious, the state would be justifiable in restraining them by force, although a mistaken conscience might be mixed up with the error. We may therefore conclude that, as to religious sects, the plea of conscience does not take their conduct out of the

cognizance of the civil Magistrate when the peace, the morality, and safety of society are infringed upon ; but that, otherwise, the rights of conscience are inviolable, even when it is obviously erroneous, and, religiously considered, as to the individual, dangerous. The case then is one which is to be dealt with by instruction, and moral suasion. It belongs to public instructors, and to all well-informed persons, to correct an ignorant and perverse conscience, by friendly and compassionate admonition ; and the power of the Magistrate is only lawfully interposed when the effect complained of so falls upon society as to infringe upon the rights of others, or upon the public morals and peace ; —but even then the facts ought to be obvious, and not constructive.

The case of those who reject the revelation of the Scriptures must be considered on its own merits.

Simple Deism, in a Christian country, may lay a foundation for such a plea of conscience as the state ought to admit, although it should be rejected by a sound theologian. The Deist derives his religion by inference from what he supposes discoverable of the attributes and will of God from nature, and the course of the divine government. Should he conclude that among such indications of the will of God there are those which make it his duty to profess his opinions, to attack the evidence of our divine revelation as of insufficient proof, and to worship God in a manner more agreeable to his system, it would be too delicate an interference of a Government with a question of conscience, to be allowed to make itself the judge whether any such conviction could be conscientiously entertained ; although by Divines, in their character of public instructors, this would properly be denied. Absolutely to shut out, by penal laws, all discussion on the evidences of divine revelation, would probably make secret infidels in such numbers as would more than counterbalance the advantage which would be gained, and that by the suspicion which it would excite. But this principle would not extend to the protection of any doctrine directly subversive of justice, chastity, or humanity ; for then society would be attacked, and the natural, as well as civil, rights of man invaded. Nor can opprobrious and blasphemous attacks upon

Christianity be covered by a plea of conscience and right, since these are not necessary to argument. It is evident that conscience, in the most liberal construction of the term, cannot be pleaded in their behalf ; and they are not innocent even as to society.

To those systems which deny the immortality of the soul, and, consequently, a state of future retribution, and which assume any of the forms of Atheism, no toleration can, consistently with duty, be extended by a Christian government. The reasons of this exception are, 1. That the very basis of its jurisprudence, which is founded upon a belief in God, the sanctity of oaths, and a future state, is assaulted by such doctrines, and that it cannot co-exist with them. 2. That they are subversive of the morals of the people. And, 3. That no conscience can be pleaded by their votaries for the avowal of such tenets. When the existence of a God and his moral government are denied, no conscience can exist to require the publication of such tenets ; for this cannot be a duty imposed upon them by God, since they deny his existence. No right of conscience is, therefore, violated when they are restrained by civil penalties. Such persons cannot have the advantages of society, without submitting to the principles on which it is founded ; and as they profess to believe that they are not accountable beings, their silence cannot be a guilt to them ; they give up the argument drawn from conscience, and from its rights, which have no existence at all but as founded upon revealed duty.

The second branch of justice we have denominated “ economical :” It respects those relations which grow out of the existence of men in families.

The first is that of husband and wife, and arises out of the institution of marriage.

The foundation of the marriage union is the will of God that the human race should “ increase and multiply,” but only through a chaste and restricted conjunction of one man and one woman, united by their free vows in a bond made by the divine law indissoluble, except by death or by adultery. The will of God as to marriage is, however, general ; and is not so



expressed as to lay an imperative obligation to marry upon every one, in all circumstances. There was no need of the law being directed to each individual as such, since the instincts of nature, and the affection of love planted in human beings, were sufficient to guarantee its general observance. The very bond of marriage, too, being the preference founded upon love, rendered the act one in which choice and feeling were to have great influence; nor could a prudent regard to circumstances be excluded. Cases were possible in which such a preference as is essential to the felicity and advantages of that state might not be excited, nor the due degree of affection to warrant the union called forth. There might be cases in which circumstances might be inimical to the full discharge of some of the duties of that state; as the comfortable maintenance of a wife, and a proper provision for children. Some individuals would also be called by Providence to duties in the church and in the world, which might better be performed in a single and unfettered life; and seasons of persecution, as we are taught by St. Paul, have rendered it an act of Christian prudence to abstain even from this honourable estate. The general rule, however, is in favour of marriage; and all exceptions seem to require justification on some principle grounded upon an equal or a paramount obligation.

One intention of marriage in its original institution was, the production of the greatest number of healthy children; and that it secures this object is proved from the universal fact, that population increases more, and is of better quality, where marriage is established and its sacred laws are observed, than where the intercourse of the sexes is promiscuous. A second end was the establishment of the interesting and influential relations of acknowledged children and parents, from which the most endearing, meliorating, and pure affections result, and which could not exist without marriage. It is, indeed, scarcely possible even to sketch the numerous and important effects of this sacred institution, which at once displays, in the most affecting manner, the divine benevolence and the divine wisdom. It secures the preservation and tender nurture of children, by concentrating an affection upon them, which is

dissipated and lost whenever fornication prevails. It creates conjugal tenderness, filial piety, the attachment of brothers and sisters, and of collateral relations. It softens the feelings, and increases the benevolence of society at large, by bringing all these affections to operate powerfully within each of those domestic and family circles of which society is composed. It excites industry and economy, and secures the communication of moral knowledge, and the inculcation of civility, and early habits of submission to authority, by which men are fitted to become the subjects of a public government, and without which, perhaps, no government could be sustained but by brute force, or, it may be, not sustained at all. These are some of the innumerable benefits by which marriage promotes human happiness, and the peace and strength of the community at large.

The institution of marriage not only excludes the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes, but polygamy also; a practice almost equally fatal to the kind affections, to education, to morals, and to purity. The argument of our Lord with the Pharisees, on the subject of divorce, Matthew xix., assumes it as even acknowledged by the Jews, that marriage was not only of divine institution, but that it consisted in the union of two only, —“They twain shall be one flesh.” This was the law of marriage given at first, not to Adam and Eve only, but prospectively to all their descendants. The first instance of polygamy was that of Lamech, and this has no sanction from the Scripture; which may be observed of other instances in the Old Testament. They were opposed to the original law, and in all cases appear to have been punished with many afflictive visitations. The Mosaic law, although polygamy appears to have been practised under it, gives no direct countenance to the practice; which intimates that, as in the case of divorce, the connivance was not intended to displace the original institution. Hence, in the language of the Old Testament, as well as of the New, the terms “husband” and “wife” in the singular number continually occur; and a passage in the Prophet Malachi is so remarkable, as to warrant the conclusion, that among the pious Jews, the original law was never wholly out of

sight. "Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee, and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously, yet she is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one?"—(one woman)—"Yet had he the residue of the Spirit?"—(and therefore could have made more than one)—"And wherefore one?" "That he might seek a goodly seed," is the answer; which strongly shows how closely connected in the Prophet's mind were the circumstances of piety in the offspring and the restraint of marriage to one wife only; for he thus glances at one of the obvious evils of polygamy, its deteriorating moral influence upon children. If, however, in some instances the practice of the Jews fell short of the strictness of the original law of marriage, that law is now fully restored by Christ. In a discourse with the Pharisees, he not only re-enacts that law, but guards against its evasion by the practice of divorce; and asserts the marriage union to be indissoluble by any thing but adultery. The argument of our Lord in this discourse is, indeed, equally conclusive against polygamy and against the practice of divorce; for "if," says Dr. Paley, "whoever putteth away his wife and marrieth another committeth adultery, he who marrieth another, the first wife being living, is no less guilty of adultery; because the adultery does not consist in the repudiation of the first wife; for, however cruel and unjust that may be, it is not adultery; but in entering into a second marriage, during the legal existence and obligation of the first."

Nature itself comes in also as a confirmation of this original law. In births, there is a small surplusage of males over females; which, being reduced by the more precarious life of males, and by the accidents to which, more than females, they are exposed from wars and dangerous employments, brings the number of males and females to a par, and shows that in the order of Providence a man ought to have but one wife; and that where polygamy is not allowed, every woman may have a husband. This equality, too, is found in all countries; although some licentious writers have attempted to deny it upon unsound evidence.

Another end of marriage was, the prevention of fornication ; and as this is done, not only by providing for a lawful gratification of the sexual appetite, but more especially by that mutual affection upon which marriages, when contracted according to the will of God, are founded, this conjunction necessarily requires that degree of love between the contracting parties which produces a preference of each other above every man or woman in the world. Wherever this degree of affection does not exist, it may, therefore, be concluded that the rite of marriage is profaned, and the greatest security for the accomplishment of its moral ends weakened or destroyed. Interest, compliance with the views of family connexions, caprice, or corporal attractions, it may be therefore concluded, are not in themselves lawful grounds of marriage, as tending, without affection, to frustrate the intention of God in its institution ; to which end all are bound to subject themselves. On the other hand, since love is often a delusive and sickly affection, exceedingly temporary and uncertain when it is unconnected with judgment and prudence ; and also because marriages are for the most part contracted by the young and inexperienced, whose passions are then strongest when their judgments are most immature ; in no step in life is the counsel of others more necessary, and in no case ought it to be sought with greater docility, than in this. A proper respect to the circumstances of age, fitness, &c., ought never to be superseded by the plea of mere affection ; although no circumstances can justify marriage without that degree of affection which produces an absolute preference.

Whether marriage be a civil or a religious contract, has been a subject of dispute. The truth seems to be, that it is both. It has its engagements to men, and its vows to God. A Christian state recognises marriage as a branch of public morality, and a source of civil peace and strength. It is connected with the peace of society by assigning one woman to one man ; and the State protects him, therefore, in her exclusive possession. Christianity, by allowing divorce in the event of adultery, supposes, also, that the crime must be proved by proper evidence before the civil Magistrate ; and lest divorce

should be the result of unfounded suspicion, or be made a cover for license, the decision of the case could safely be lodged nowhere else. Marriage, too, as placing one human being more completely under the power of another than any other relation, requires laws for the protection of those who are thus so exposed to injury. The distribution of society into families, also, can only be an instrument for promoting the order of the community, by the cognizance which the law takes of the head of a family, and by making him responsible, to a certain extent, for the conduct of those under his influence. Questions of property are also involved in marriage and its issue. The law must, therefore, for these and many other weighty reasons, be cognizant of marriage; must prescribe various regulations respecting it; require publicity of the contract; and guard some of the great injunctions of religion in the matter by penalties. In no well-ordered State can marriage, therefore, be so exclusively left to religion as to shut out the cognizance and control of the State. But then those who would have the whole matter to lie between the parties themselves, and the civil Magistrate, appear wholly to forget that marriage is a solemn religious act, in which vows are made to God by both persons, who, when the rite is properly understood, engage to abide by all those laws with which he has guarded the institution; to love and cherish each other; and to remain faithful to each other until death. For if, at least, they profess belief in Christianity, whatever duties are laid upon husbands and wives in holy Scripture, they engage to obey, by the very act of their contracting marriage. The question then is, whether such vows to God as are necessarily involved in marriage, are to be left between the parties and God privately, or whether they ought to be publicly made before his Ministers and the church. On this the Scriptures are silent: but though Michaëlis has showed \* that the Priests under the law were not appointed to celebrate marriage; yet, in the practice of the modern Jews, it is a religious ceremony, the chief Rabbi of the synagogue being present, and prayers being

\* Commentaries on the Laws of Moses.

appointed for the occasion.\* This renders it probable that the character of the ceremony under the law, from the most ancient times, was a religious one. The more direct connexion of marriage with religion in Christian States, by assigning its celebration to the Ministers of religion, appears to be a very beneficial custom, and one which the State has a right to enjoin. For since the welfare and morals of society are so much interested in the performance of the mutual duties of the married state ; and since those duties have a religious as well as a civil character, it is most proper that some provision should be made for explaining those duties ; and for this a standing form of marriage is best adapted. By acts of religion, also, they are more solemnly impressed upon the parties. When this is prescribed in any State, it becomes a Christian cheerfully, and even thankfully, to comply with a custom of so important a tendency, as matter of conscientious subjection to lawful authority, although no scriptural precept can be pleaded for it. That the ceremony should be confined to the Clergy of an established Church, is a different consideration. We are inclined to think that the religious effect would be greater, were the Ministers of each religious body to be authorized by the State to celebrate marriages among their own people, due provision being made for the regular and secure registry of them, and to prevent the civil laws respecting marriage from being evaded.

When this important contract is once made, then certain rights are acquired by the parties mutually, who are also bound by reciprocal duties, in the fulfilment of which the practical righteousness of each consists. Here, also, the superior character of the morals of the New Testament, as well as their higher authority, is illustrated. It may, indeed, be within the scope of mere moralists to show, that fidelity, and affection, and all the courtesies necessary to maintain affection, are rationally obligatory upon those who are connected by the nuptial bond ; but in Christianity that fidelity is guarded by the express law, “Thou shalt not commit adultery ;” and by our

\* Allen's Modern Judaism.

Lord's exposition of the spirit of that law, which forbids the indulgence of loose thoughts and desires, and places the purity of the heart under the guardianship of that hallowed fear which his authority tends to inspire. Affection, too, is made a matter of diligent cultivation upon considerations, and by a standard, peculiar to our religion. Husbands are placed in a relation to their wives, similar to that which Christ bears to his church, and his example is thus made their rule: As Christ "gave himself," his life, "for the church," (Eph. v. 25,) so are they to hazard life for their wives. As Christ saves his church, so is it the bounden duty of husbands to endeavour, by every possible means, to promote the religious edification and salvation of their wives. The connexion is thus exalted into a religious one; and when love which knows no abatement, protection at the hazard of life, and a tender and constant solicitude for the salvation of a wife, are thus enjoined, the greatest possible security is established for the exercise of kindness and fidelity. The oneness of this union is also more forcibly stated in Scripture than anywhere beside. "They twain shall be one flesh." "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies; he that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." Precept and illustration can go no higher than this; and nothing evidently is wanting either of direction or authority to raise the state of marriage into the highest, most endearing, and sanctified relation in which two human beings can stand to each other. The duties of wives are reciprocal to those of husbands. The outline of the note below comprises both: it presents a series of obligations which are obviously drawn from the New Testament; but which nothing except that could furnish. The extract is made from an old writer, and, although expressed in homely phrase, will be admired for discrimination and comprehensiveness.\*

\* PARTICULAR DUTIES OF WIVES.

*Subjection*, the generall head of all wives duties.

PARTICULAR DUTIES OF HUSBANDS.

*Wisdom and love*, the generall heads of all husbands duties.

The duties of children is a branch of Christian morality which receives both illustration and authority in a very remarkable and peculiar manner from the Scriptures. "Ho-

Acknowledgment of an husband's  
superioritie.

A due esteem of her owne husband as  
the best for her, and worthy of  
honour on her part.

An inward wife-like fear.

An outward reverend carriage to-  
wards her husband, which con-  
sisteth in a wife-like sobrietie, mild-  
nesse, curtissie, and modestie in  
apparel.

Reverend speech to and of her hus-  
band.

Obedience.

Forbearing to do without or against  
her husband's consent, such things  
as he hath power to order; as, to  
dispose and order the common  
goods of the familie, and the allow-  
ance for it, or children, servants,  
cattell, guests, journies, &c.

A ready yielding to what her hus-  
band would have done. This is  
manifested by a willingnesse to  
dwell where he will, to come when  
he calls, and to do what he re-  
quireth.

A patient bearing of any reproofe,  
and a ready redressing of that for  
which she is justly reprov'd.

Contentment with her husband's pre-  
sent estate.

Such a subjection as may stand with  
her subjection to Christ.

Such a subjection as the church  
yieldeth to Christ, which is sin-  
cere, pure, cheerfull, constant, for  
conscience' sake.

Acknowledgment of a wife's neere  
conjunction and fellowship with  
her husband.

A good esteeme of his owne wife as  
the best for him, and worthy of  
love on his part.

An inward entire affection.

An outward amiable carriage to-  
wards his wife, which consisteth in  
an husband-like gravity, mildnesse,  
courteous acceptance of her cur-  
tissie, and allowing her to wear fit  
apparel.

Mild and loving speech to and of his  
wife.

A wise maintaining his authority,  
and forbearing to exact all that is  
in his power.

A ready yielding to his wife's re-  
quest, and giving a generall con-  
sent and libertie unto her to order  
the affairs of the house, children,  
servants, &c. And a free allowing  
her something to bestow as she  
seeth occasion.

A forbearing to exact more than his  
wife is willing to doe, or to force  
her to dwell where it is not meet,  
or to enioyne her to do things that  
are unmeet in themselves, or  
against her mind.

A wise ordering of reproofe, not  
using it without just and weighty  
cause, and then privately, and  
meekly.

A provident care for his wife, ac-  
cording to his abilities.

A forbearing to exact any thing  
which stands not with a good con-  
science.

Such a love as Christ beareth to the  
church, and man to himselfe,  
which is first free, in deed and  
truth, pure, chaste. constancie



nour thy father and thy mother," is a precept which occupies a place in those tables of law which were written at first by the

**ABERRATIONS OF WIVES FROM  
THEIR PARTICULAR DUTIES.**

*Ambition*, the generall ground of the aberrations of wives.

A conceit that wives are their husbands equals.

A conceit that she could better subject herselfe to any other man than to her own husband.

An inward despising of her husband.

Unreverend behaviour towards her husband, manifested by lightnesse, sullenness, scornfulness, and vanity in her attire.

Unreverend speech to and of her husband.

A stout standing on her owne will.

A peremptory undertaking to do things as she list, without and against her husband's consent. This is manifested by privy purloining his goods, taking allowance, ordering children, servants, and cattell, feasting strangers, making journies and vows as herselfe listeth.

An obstinate standing upon her owne will, making her husband dwell where she will, and refusing to goe when he calls, or to doe any thing upon his command.

Disdaine at reproofe ; giving word for word ; and waxing worse for being reproved.

Discontent at her husband's estate.

Such a pleasing of her husband as offendeth Christ.

**ABERRATIONS OF HUSBANDS  
FROM THEIR PARTICULAR  
DUTIES.**

*Want of wisdom and love*, the generall grounds of the aberrations of husbands.

Too mean account of wives.

A preposterous conceit of his owne wife to be the worst of all, and that he could love any but her.

A stoicall disposition, without all heat of affection.

An unbecoming carriage towards his wife, manifested by his baseness, tyrannicall usage of her, loftinesse, rashnesse, and niggardlinesse.

Harsh, proud, and bitter speeches to and of his wife.

Losing of his authority.

Too much strictnesse over his wife.

This is manifested by restraining her from doing any thing without particular and expresse consent, taking too strict account of her, and allowing her no more than is needfull for her own private use.

Too lordly a standing upon the highest step of his authority ; being too frequent, insolent, and peremptory, in commanding things frivolous, unmeet, and against his wife's minde and conscience.

Rashnesse and bitterness in reproving ; and that too frequently, on slight occasions, and disgracefully before children, servants, and strangers.

A carelesse neglect of his wife, and niggardly dealing with her, and that in her weakness.

A commanding of unlawful things.

finger of God ; and is, as the Apostle Paul notes, “ the first commandment with promise.” The meaning of the term “ honour ” is comprehensive, and imports, as appears from various passages in which it occurs, reverence, affection, and grateful obedience. It expresses at once a principle and a feeling, each of which must influence the practice ; one binding obedience upon the conscience, the other rendering it the free effusion of the heart ; one securing the great points of duty, and the other giving rise to a thousand tender sentiments and courtesies which mutually ameliorate the temper, and open one of the richest sources of domestic felicity.

The honouring of parents is likewise enforced in Scripture by a temporal promise. This is not peculiar to the law ; for when the Apostle refers to this “ as the first commandment with promise,” and adds, “ that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth ;” (Eph. vi. 3, 4 ; ) he clearly intimates that this promise is carried forward into the Christian dispensation ; and though it is undoubtedly modified by the circumstances of an economy which is not so much founded upon temporal promises as the law, it retains its full force as a general declaration of special favour on the part of God. This duty also derives a most influential and affecting illustration from the conduct of our Lord, who was himself an instance of subjection to parents, of the kindest behaviour to them, and who, amidst his agonies on the cross, commended his weeping mother to the special regard of the beloved disciple, John, charging him with her care and support as a son, in his own stead. In no system of mere ethics, certainly, is this great duty, on which so much of human interest and felicity depends, and which exerts so much influence upon society, thus illustrated, and thus enforced.

The duties of children may be thus sketched :—

Love, which is founded upon esteem and reverence, com-

Such a subjection as is most unlike to the church's, viz., fained, forced, fickle, &c.

Such a disposition as is most unlike to Christ's, and to that which a man beareth to himselfe, viz., compliment, impure, for by-respects, inconstant, &c.

prises gratitude also ; no small degree of which is obligatory upon every child for the unwearied cares, labours, and kindness of parental affection. In the few unhappy instances in which esteem for a parent can have little place, gratitude, at least, ought to remain ; nor can any case arise in which the obligation of filial love can be cancelled.

Reverence, which consists in that honourable esteem of parents which children ought to cherish in their hearts, and from which springs, on the one hand, the desire to please, and on the other, the fear to offend. The fear of a child is, however, opposed to the fear of a slave : The latter has respect chiefly to the punishment which may be inflicted ; but the other, being mixed with love, and the desire to be loved, has respect to the offence which may be taken by a parent, his grief and his displeasure. Hence the fear of God, as a grace of the Spirit in the regenerate, is compared to the fear of children. This reverential regard due to parents has its external expression in all honour and civility, whether in words or actions. The behaviour is to be submissive, the speech respectful ; reproof is to be borne by them with meekness, and the impatience of parents sustained in silence. Children are bound to close their eyes as much as possible upon the failings and infirmities of the authors of their being, and always to speak of them honourably among themselves, and in the presence of others. “The hearts of all men go along with Noah in laying punishment upon Ham for his unnatural and profane derision, and love the memory of those sons that would not see themselves, nor suffer others to be the witnesses of, the miscarriage of their father.” In the duty of honouring parents, is also included their support when in necessity. This appears from our Lord’s application of this commandment of the law in his reproof of the Pharisees, who, if they had made a vow of their property, thought it then lawful to withhold assistance from their parents. (Matt. xv. 4—6.)

To affection and reverence is to be added,—

Obedience, which is universal : “Children, obey your parents in all things ;” with only one restriction, which

respects the consciences of children, when at age to judge for themselves. The Apostle therefore adds, "in the Lord." That this limits the obedience of children to the lawful commands of parents, is clear also from our Lord's words, "If any one love father or mother more than me, he is not worthy of me." God is to be loved and obeyed above all. In all lawful things the rule is absolute; and the obedience, like that we owe to God, ought to be cheerful and unwearied. Should it chance to cross our inclinations, this will be no excuse for hesitancy, much less for refusal.

One of the principal cases in which this principle is often most severely tried, is that of marriage. The general rule clearly is, that neither son nor daughter ought to marry against the command of a father, with whom the prime authority of the family is lodged; nor even without the consent of the mother, should the father be willing, if she can find any weighty reasons for her objection; for, although the authority of the mother is subordinate and secondary, yet is she entitled to obedience from the child. There is, however, a considerable difference between marrying at the command of a parent, and marrying against his prohibition. In the first case, children are more at liberty than in the other; yet even here, the wishes of parents in this respect are to be taken into most serious consideration, with a preponderating desire to yield to them: But if a child feels that his affections still refuse to run in the course of the parents' wishes; if he is conscious that he cannot love his intended wife "as himself," as "his own flesh;" he is prohibited by a higher rule, which presents an insuperable barrier to his compliance. In this case the child is at liberty to refuse, if it is done deliberately, and expressed with modesty and proper regret at not being able to comply, for the reasons stated; and every parent ought to dispense freely with the claim of obedience. But to marry in opposition to a parent's express prohibition, is a very grave case. The general rule lies directly against this act of disobedience, as against all others; and the violation of it is therefore sin. And what blessing can be expected to follow such marriages? or rather, what curse may not be feared to follow

them? The law of God is transgressed, and the image of his authority in parents is despised. Those exceptions to this rule which can be justified, are very few.

In no case but where the parties have obtained the full legal age of twenty-one years, ought an exception to be even considered; but it may perhaps be allowed, 1. When the sole objection of the parent is the marriage of his child with a person fearing God. 2. When the sole reason given is, a wish to keep a child unmarried from caprice, interest, or other motive; which no parent has a right to require, when the child is of legal age. 3. When the objections are simply those of prejudice, without reasonable ground: But in this case, the child ought not to assume to be the sole judge of the parent's reasons; and would not be at liberty to act, unless supported by the opinion of impartial and judicious friends, whose advice and mediation ought to be asked, in order that, in so delicate an affair, he or she may proceed with a clear conscience.

The persuading a daughter to elope from her parents' house, where the motive is no other than the wilful following of personal affection, which spurns at parental control and authority, must therefore be considered as a great crime. It induces the daughter to commit a very criminal act of disobedience; and, on the part of the man, it is a worse kind of felony than stealing the property of another. "For children are much more properly a man's own than his goods, and the more highly to be esteemed, by how much reasonable creatures are to be preferred before senseless things."\*

The duties of parents are exhibited with equal clearness in the Scriptures, and contain a body of most important practical instructions.

The first duty is love, which, although a natural instinct, is yet to be cultivated and nourished by Christians under a sense of duty, and by frequent meditation upon all those important and interesting relations in which religion has placed them and their offspring. The duty of sustentation and care, therefore, under the most trying circumstances, is imperative upon parents;

\* Gouge On Relative Duties.

for, though this is not directly enjoined, it is supposed necessarily to follow from that parental love which the Scriptures inculcate; and also, because the denial of either to infants would destroy them, and thus the unnatural parent would be involved in the crime of murder.

To this follows instruction; care for the mind succeeding the nourishment and care of the body. This relates to the providing such an education for children as is suited to their condition, and by which they may be fitted to gain a reputable livelihood when they are of age to apply themselves to business. But it specially relates to their instruction in the doctrines of holy writ. This is clearly what the Apostle Paul means by directing parents to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. vi. 4.) A parent is considered in Scripture as a Priest in his own family, which is a view of this relation not to be found in ethical writers, or deducible from any principles from which they would infer parental duties, independently of revelation; and from this it derives a most exalted character. The offices of sacrifice, intercession, and religious instruction, were all performed by the Patriarchs; and, as we have already seen, although under the law the offering of sacrifices was restrained to the appointed priesthood, yet was it still the duty of the head of the family to bring his sacrifices for immolation in the prescribed manner; and so far was the institution of public teachers from being designed to supersede the father's office, that the heads of the Jewish families are specially enjoined to teach the law to their children diligently and daily. (Deut. vi. 7.) Under the same view does Christianity regard the heads of its families, as Priests in their houses, offering spiritual gifts and sacrifices, and as the religious instructors of their children. Hence it is in the passage above quoted, that fathers are commanded to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" or, in other words, in the knowledge of the doctrines, duties, motives, and hopes of the Christian religion. This is a work, therefore, which belongs to the very office of a father as the Priest of his household, and cannot be neglected by him, but at his own, and his children's peril. Nor is it to be occasionally and

cursorily performed, but so that the object may be attained, namely, that they may "know the Scriptures from their childhood," and have stored their minds with their laws, and doctrines, and promises, as their guide in future life; a work which will require, at least, as much attention from the Christian as from the Jewish parent, who was commanded on this wise,—“Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” The practice of the Jews in this respect appears to have been adopted by the Christians of the primitive churches, which were composed of both Jewish and Gentile converts in almost every place; and from them it is probable that the early customs of teaching children to commit portions of Scripture to memory, to repeat prayers night and morning, and to approach their parents for their blessing, might be derived. The last pleasing and impressive form, which contains a recognition of the domestic priesthood, as inherited in the head of any family, has in this country grown of late into disuse, which is much to be regretted.

It is also essential to the proper discharge of the parental duty of instructing children, that every means should be used to render what is taught influential upon the heart and conduct. It is therefore solemnly imperative upon parents to be “holy in all manner of conversation and godliness,” and thus to enforce truth by example. It concerns them, as much as Ministers, to be anxious for the success of their labours; and, recognising the same principle, that “God giveth the increase,” to be abundant in prayers for the gift of the Holy Spirit to their children. Both as a means of grace, and in recognition of God’s covenant of mercy with them and their seed after them, it behoves them also to bring their children to baptism in their infancy; to explain to them the baptismal covenant when they are able to understand it; and to habituate them from early years to the observance of the Sabbath, and to regular attendance on the public worship of God.

The government of children is another great branch of parental duty, in which both the parents are bound cordially

to unite. Like all other kinds of government appointed by God, the end is the good of those subject to it; and it therefore excludes all caprice, vexation, and tyranny. In the case of parents, it is eminently a government of love; and therefore, although it includes strictness, it necessarily excludes severity. The mild and benevolent character of our divine religion displays itself here, as in every other instance where the heat of temper, the possession of power, or the ebullitions of passion might be turned against the weak and unprotected. The civil laws of those countries in which Christianity was first promulgated, gave great power to parents over their children, \* which, in the unfeeling spirit of Paganism, was often harshly and even cruelly used. On the contrary, St. Paul enjoins, “And ye, fathers, provoke not your children to wrath,” meaning plainly, by a rigorous severity, an overbearing and tyrannical behaviour, tending to exasperate angry passions in them. So again: “Fathers, provoke not your children, lest they be discouraged,” discouraged from all attempts at pleasing, as regarding it an impossible task, “and be unfitted to pass through the world with advantage, when their spirits have been unreasonably broken under an oppressive yoke, in the earliest years of their life.”† But though the parental government is founded upon kindness, and can never be separated from it, when rightly understood and exercised, it is still government, and is a trust committed by God to the parent, which must be faithfully discharged. Corporal correction is not only allowed, but is made a duty in Scripture, where other means would be ineffectual. Yet it may be laid down as a certain principle, that, where the authority of a parent is exercised with constancy and discretion, and enforced by gravity, kindness, and charity, this will seldom be found necessary; nor, when the steady resolution of the parent to inflict it when it is demanded by the case is once known to the child, will it need often to be repeated. Parental government is also concerned in forming

\* By the old Roman law, the father had the power of life and death, as to his children.

† Doddridge on Colossians iii. 21.



the manners of children ; in inculcating civility, order, cleanliness, industry, and economy ; in repressing extravagant desires and gratifications in dress and amusements ; and in habituating the will to a ready submission to authority. It must be so supreme, whatever the age of children may be, as to control the whole order and habits of the family, and to exclude all licentiousness, riot, and unbecoming amusements from the house, lest the curse of Eli should fall upon those who imitate his example in not reproofing evil with sufficient earnestness, and not restraining it by the effectual exercise of authority.

Another duty of parents is the comfortable settlement of their children in the world, as far as their ability extends. This includes the discreet choosing of a calling, by which their children may “provide things honest in the sight of all men ;” taking especial care, however, that their moral safety shall be consulted in the choice,—a consideration which too many disregard, under the influence of carelessness, or a vain ambition. The “laying up for children ” is also sanctioned both by nature, and by our religion ; but this is not so to be understood as that the comforts of a parent, according to his rank in life, should be abridged ; nor that it should interfere with those charities which Christianity has made his personal duty.

The next of these reciprocal duties are those of servant and master.

This is a relation which will continue to the end of time. Equality of condition is alike contrary to the nature of things, and to the appointment of God. Some must toil, and others direct ; some command, and others obey ; nor is this order contrary to the real interest of the multitude, as at first sight it might appear. The acquisition of wealth by a few affords more abundant employment to the many ; and in a well-ordered, thriving, and industrious state, except in seasons of peculiar distress, it is evident that the comforts of the lower classes are greater than could be attained were the land equally divided among them, and so left to their own cultivation that no one should be the servant of another. To preserve such a state of things would be impossible ; and could it be done, no arts but of the rudest kind, no manufactures, and no commerce could

exist. The very first attempt to introduce these would necessarily create the two classes of workmen and employers ; of the many who labour with the hands, and the few who labour with the mind, in directing the operations ; and thus the equality would be destroyed.

It is not, however, to be denied, that, through the bad principles and violent passions of man, the relations of servant and master have been a source of great evil and misery. The more, therefore, is that religion to be valued, which, since these relations must exist, restrains the evil that is incident to them, and shows how they may be made sources of mutual benevolence and happiness. Wherever the practical influence of religion has not been felt, servants have generally been more or less treated with contempt, contumely, harshness, and oppression. They, on the contrary, are, from their natural corruption, inclined to resent authority, to indulge selfishness, and to commit fraud, either by withholding the just quantum of labour, or by direct theft. From the conflict of these evils in servants and in masters, too often result suspicion, cunning, over-reaching, malignant passions, contemptuous and irritating speeches, the loss of principle in the servant, and of kind and equitable feeling on the part of the master.

The direct manner in which the precepts of the New Testament tend to remedy these evils cannot but be remarked. Government in masters, as well as in fathers, is an appointment of God, though differing in circumstances ; and it is therefore to be honoured. “ Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honour ;” a direction which enjoins both respectful thoughts, and humility, and propriety of external demeanour towards them. Obedience to their commands in all things lawful is next enforced ; which obedience is to be grounded on principle and conscience, on “ singleness of heart, as unto Christ ;” thus serving a master with the same sincerity, the same desire to do the appointed work well, as is required of us by Christ. This service is also to be cheerful, and not wrung out merely by a sense of duty : “ Not with eye service, as men-pleasers ;” not having respect simply to the approbation of the master ; but “ as the servants

of Christ," making profession of his religion, "doing the will of God" in this branch of duty, "from the heart," with alacrity and good feeling. The duties of servants, stated in these brief precepts, might easily be shown to comprehend every particular which can be justly required of persons in this station; and the whole is enforced by a sanction which could have no place but in a revelation from God,—“knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.” (Eph. vi. 5—8.) In other words, even the common duties of servants, when faithfully, cheerfully, and piously performed, are by Christianity made rewardable actions: “Of the Lord ye shall receive a reward.”

The duties of servants and masters are, however, strictly reciprocal. Hence the Apostle continues his injunctions as to the right discharge of these relations, by saying, immediately after he had prescribed the conduct of servants, “And ye, masters, do the same things unto them;” that is, act towards them upon the same equitable, conscientious, and benevolent principles as you exact from them. He then grounds his rules, as to masters, upon the great and influential principle, “Knowing that your Master is in heaven;” that you are under authority, and are accountable to him for your conduct to your servants. Thus masters are put under the eye of God, who not only maintains their authority, when properly exercised, by making their servants accountable for any contempt of it, and for every other failure of duty, but also holds the master himself responsible for its just and mild exercise. A solemn and religious aspect is thus at once given to a relation, which by many is considered as one merely of interest. When the Apostle enjoins it on masters to “forbear threatening,” he inculcates the treatment of servants with kindness of manner, with humanity and good nature; and, by consequence also, the cultivation of that benevolent feeling towards persons in this condition, which in all rightly-influenced minds will flow from the consideration of their equality with themselves in the sight of God; their equal share in the benefits of redemption; their relation to us as

brethren in Christ, if they are "partakers of like precious faith;" and their title to the common inheritance of heaven, where all those temporary distinctions on which human vanity is so apt to fasten shall be done away. There will also not be wanting in such minds a consideration of the service rendered; (for the benefit is mutual;) and a feeling of gratitude for service faithfully performed, although it is compensated by wages or hire.

To benevolent sentiment the Apostle, however, adds the principles of justice and equity: "Masters, give to your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven," who is the avenger of injustice. The terms "just" and "equal," though terms of near affinity, have a somewhat different signification. To give that which is just to a servant, is to deal with him according to an agreement made; but to give him what is equal, is to deal fairly and honestly with him, and to return what is his due in reason and conscience, even when there are circumstances in the case which strict law would not oblige us to take into the account. "Justice makes our contracts the measure of our dealings with others, and equity our consciences."\* Equity here may also have respect particularly to that important rule which obliges us to do to others what we would, in the same circumstances, have them to do to us. This rule of equity has a large range in the treatment of servants. It excludes all arbitrary and tyrannical government; it teaches masters to respect the strength and capacity of their servants; it represses rage and passion, contumely and insult; and it directs that their labour shall not be so extended as not to leave proper time for rest, for attendance on God's worship, and, at proper seasons, for recreation.

The religious duties of masters are also of great importance.

Under the Old Testament the servants of a house partook of the common benefit of the true religion, as appears from the case of the servants of Abraham, who were all brought into the covenant of circumcision; and from the early prohibition of

\* Flectwood's Relative Duties.

idolatrous practices in families, and; consequently, the maintenance of the common worship of God. The same consecration of whole families to God we see in the New Testament; in the baptism of houses, and the existence of domestic churches. The practice of inculcating the true religion upon servants passed from the Jews to the first Christians, and followed indeed from the conscientious employment of the master's influence in favour of piety; a point to which we shall again advert.

From all this arises the duty of instructing servants in the principles of religion; of teaching them to read, and furnishing them with the Scriptures; of having them present at family worship; and of conversing with them faithfully and affectionately respecting their best interests. In particular, it is to be observed, that servants have by the law of God a right to the Sabbath, of which no master can, without sin, deprive them. They are entitled under that law to rest on that day; and that not only for the recreation of their strength and spirits, but, especially, to enable them to attend public worship, and to read the Scriptures, and pray in private. Against this duty all those offend who employ servants in works of gain; and also those who do not so arrange the affairs of their households, that domestic servants may be as little occupied as possible with the affairs of the house, in order that they may be able religiously to use a day which is made as much theirs as their master's, by the express letter of the law of God; nor can the blessing of God be expected to rest upon families in which this shocking indifference to the religious interests of domestics, and this open disregard of the divine command, prevail. A Jewish strictness in some particulars is not bound upon Christians; as, for example, the prohibition against lighting fires. These were parts of the municipal, not the moral, law of the Jews; and they have respect to a people living in a certain climate, and in peculiar circumstances. But even these prohibitions are of use as teaching us self-denial, and that in all cases we ought to keep within the rules of necessity. Unnecessary occupations are clearly forbidden even when they do not come under the description of work for gain; and when they are avoided, there

will be sufficient leisure for every part of a family to enjoy the Sabbath as a day of rest, and as a day of undistracted devotion. We may here also advert to that heavy national offence which still hangs upon us, the denying to the great majority of our bond-slaves in the West Indies, those Sabbath rights which are secured to them by the very religion we profess. Neither as a day of rest, nor as a day of worship, is this sacred day granted to them; and for this our insolent and contemptuous defiance of God's holy law, we must be held accountable. This is a consideration which ought to induce that part of the community who retain any fear of God, to be unwearied in their applications to the Legislature until this great reproach, this weight of offence against religion and humanity, shall be taken away from us.

The employment of influence for the religious benefit of servants forms another part of the duty of every Christian master. This appears to be obligatory upon the general principle, that every thing which can be used by us to promote the will of God, and to benefit others, is a talent committed to us, which we are required by our Lord to occupy. It is greatly to be feared, that this duty is much neglected among professedly religious masters; that even domestic servants are suffered to live in a state of spiritual danger, without any means being regularly and affectionately used to bring them to the practical knowledge of the truth; means which, if used with judgment and perseverance, and enforced by the natural influence of a superior, might prove in many instances both corrective and saving. But if this duty be much neglected in households, it is much more disregarded as to that class of servants who are employed as day-labourers by the farmer, as journeymen by the master artisan, and as workmen by the manufacturer. More or less the master comes into immediate connexion with this class of servants; and although they are not so directly under his control as those of his household, nor within the reach of the same instruction, yet is he bound to discountenance vice among them; to recommend their attendance on public worship; to see that their children are sent to schools; to provide religious help for them when sick; to prefer

sober and religious men to others ; and to pay them their wages in due time for market, and so early on the Saturday, or on the Friday, that their families may not be obstructed in their preparations for attending the house of God on the Lord's day morning. If the religious character and bias of the master were thus felt by his whole establishment, and a due regard paid uniformly to justice and benevolence in the treatment of all in his employ, not only would great moral good be the result, but there would be reason to hope that the relation between employers and their workmen, which, in consequence of frequent disputes respecting wages and combinations, has been rendered suspicious and vexatious, would assume a character of mutual confidence and reciprocal good-will.

Political justice respects chiefly the relation of subject and Sovereign,—a delicate branch of morals in a religious system introduced into the world under such circumstances as Christianity, and which in its wisdom it has resolved into general principles of easy application, in ordinary circumstances. With equal wisdom it has left extraordinary emergencies unprovided for by special directions ; though even in such cases the path of duty is not without light reflected upon it from the whole genius and spirit of the institution.

On the origin of power, and other questions of government, endless controversies have been held, and very different theories adopted, which, so happily is the world exchanging government by force for government by public opinion, have now lost much of their interest, and require not, therefore, a particular examination.

On this branch of morals, as on the others we have already considered, the Scriptures throw a light peculiar to themselves ; and the theory of government which they contain will be found perfectly accordant with the experience of the present and best age of the world as to practical government, and exhibits a perfect harmony with that still more improved civil condition which it must ultimately assume in consequence of the diffusion of knowledge, freedom, and virtue.

The leading doctrine of Scripture is, that government is an ordinance of God. It was manifestly his will that men should

live in society ; this cannot be doubted. The very laws he has given to men prescribing the relative duties, assume the permanent existence of social relations, and therefore place them under regulation. From this fact the divine appointment of government flows as a necessary consequence. A society cannot exist without rules or laws ; and it therefore follows that such laws must be upheld by enforcement. Hence an executive power in some form must arise, to guard, to judge, to reward, to punish. For if there were no executers of laws, the laws would become a dead letter, which would be the same thing as having none at all ; and where there are no laws, there can be no society. But we are not left to inference. In the first ages of the world government was paternal, and the power of government was vested in parents by the express appointment of God. Among the Jews, rulers, judges, kings, were also appointed by God himself ; and, as for all other nations, the New Testament expressly declares, that “the powers which be are ordained of God.”

The origin of power is not, therefore, from man, but from God. It is not left as a matter of choice to men, whether they will submit to be governed or not ; it is God’s appointment that they should be subject to those powers whom he, in his government of the world, has placed over them, in all things for which he has instituted government, that is, that it should be “a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well.” Nor are they at liberty “to resist the power,” when employed in accomplishing such legitimate ends of government ; nor to deny the right, nor to refuse the means, even when they have the power to do so, by which the supreme power may restrain evil, and enforce truth, righteousness, and peace. Every supreme power, we may therefore conclude, is invested with full and unalienable authority to govern well ; and the people of every state are bound, by the institution of God, cheerfully and thankfully to submit to be so governed.

There can therefore be no such compact between any parties as shall originate the right of government, or the duty of being governed ; nor can any compact annul, in the least, the rightful authority of the supreme power to govern efficiently,



for the full accomplishment of the ends for which government was divinely appointed ; nor can it place any limit upon the duty of subjects to be governed accordingly.

We may conclude therefore, with Paley and others, that what is called "the social compact," the theory of Locke and his followers on government, is a pure fiction. In point of fact, men never did originate government by mutual agreement ; and men are all born under some government, and become its subjects, without having any terms of compact proposed to them, or giving any consent to understood terms, or being conscious at all that their assent is necessary to convey the right to govern them, or to impose upon themselves the obligation of subjection. The absurdities which Paley has pointed out as necessarily following from the theory of the social compact appear to be sufficiently well founded : But the fatal objection is, that it makes government a mere creation of man, whereas Scripture makes it an ordinance of God : It supposes no obligation anterior to human consent ; whereas the appointment of God constitutes the obligation, and is wholly independent of human choice and arrangement.

The matter of government, however, does not appear to be left so loose, as it is represented by the author of the moral and political philosophy.

The ground of the subject's obligation which he assigns is, "the will of God as collected from expediency." We prefer to assign the will of God as announced in the public law of the Scriptures ; and which manifestly establishes two points as general rules : 1. The positive obligation of men to submit to government : 2. Their obligation to yield obedience, in all things lawful to the governments under which they live, as appointed by God in the order of his providence,—“The powers that be,” the powers which actually exist, “are ordained of God.” From these two principles it will follow, that, in the case of any number of men and women being thrown together in some desert part of the world, it would be their duty to marry, to institute paternal government in their families, and to submit to a common government, in obedience to the declared will of God : And in the case of persons born under

any established government, that they are required to yield submission to it as an ordinance of God ; a power already appointed, and under which they are placed in the order of divine providence.

Evident, however, as these principles are, they can never be pleaded in favour of oppression and wrong ; since it is always to be remembered that the same Scriptures which establish these principles have set a sufficient number of guards and limits about them, and that the rights and duties of Sovereign and subject are reciprocal. The manner in which they are made to harmonize with public interest and liberty will appear after these reciprocal duties and rights are explained.

The duties of the sovereign power, whatever its form may be, are the enactment of just and equal laws ; the impartial execution of those laws in mercy ; the encouragement of religion, morality, learning, and industry ; the protection and sustenance of the poor and helpless ; the maintenance of domestic peace, and, as far as the interests of the community will allow, of peace with all nations ; the faithful observance of all treaties ; and incessant application to the cares of government, without exacting more tribute from the people than is necessary for the real wants of the State, and the honourable maintenance of its officers ; the appointment of inferior Magistrates of probity and fitness, with a diligent and strict oversight of them ; and, finally, the making provision for the continued instruction of the people in the religion of the Scriptures which it professes to receive as a revelation from God, and that with such a respect to the rights of conscience, as shall leave all men free to discharge their duties to Him who is higher than the highest.

All these obligations are either plainly expressed, or are to be inferred from such passages as the following :—" The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God ; and he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springeth out of the earth by clear shining after rain ;" images which join to the

attribute of justice a constant and diffusive beneficence. "Mercy and truth preserve the King." "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment; thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty; but in righteousness thou shalt judge." "He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous," that is, acquits the guilty in judgment, "him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him." "Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, and let them judge the people at all seasons." "Him that hath a high look and a proud heart I will not suffer. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell in my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight." To these and many similar passages in the Old Testament may be added, as so many intimations of the divine will as to rulers, those patriotic and pious practices of such of the Judges and Kings of Israel as had the express approbation of God; for although they may not apply as particular rules in all cases, they have to all succeeding ages the force of the general principles which are implied in them. The New Testament directions, although expressed generally, are equally comprehensive; and it is worthy of remark, that, whilst they assert the divine ordination of "the powers that be," they explicitly mark out for what ends they were thus appointed, and allow, therefore, of no plea of divine right in rulers for any thing contrary to them. "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," that is, things which are Cæsar's by public law and customary impost. "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; for he is the Minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the Minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the King, as supreme, or unto Governors, as unto them that are sent by him

for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well."

In these passages, which state the legitimate ends of government, and limit God's ordination of government to them, the duties of subjects are partially anticipated; but they are capable of a fuller enumeration.

Subjection and obedience are the first; qualified, however, as we know from the example of the Apostles, with exceptions as to what is contrary to conscience and morality. In such cases they obeyed not, but suffered rather. Otherwise the rule is, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers;" and that not merely "for wrath," fear of punishment, but "for conscience' sake," from a conviction that it is right. "For this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour." Supplies for the necessities of government are therefore to be willingly and faithfully furnished. Rulers are also to be treated with respect and reverence: "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." They are to be honoured both by external marks of respect, and by being maintained in dignity; their actions are to be judged of with candour and charity; and when questioned or blamed, this is to be done with moderation, and not with invective or ridicule, a mode of speaking evil of dignities which grossly offends against the Christian rule. This branch of our duties is greatly strengthened by the enjoined duty of praying for rulers, a circumstance which gives an efficacy to it which no uninspired system can furnish. "I exhort therefore that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for Kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." This holy and salutary practice is founded upon a recognition of the ordinance of God as to government; it recognises also the existing powers in every place, as God's "ministers;" it supposes that all public affairs

are under divine control ; it reminds men of the arduous duties and responsibility of governors ; it promotes a benevolent, grateful, and respectful feeling towards them ; and it is a powerful guard against the factious and seditious spirit. These are so evidently the principles and tendencies of this sacred custom, that when prayer has been used, as it sometimes has, to convey the feelings of a malignant, factious, or light spirit, every well-disposed mind must have been shocked at so profane a mockery, and must have felt that such prayers “ for all that are in authority ” were any thing but “ good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.”

Connected as these reciprocal rights and duties of rulers, and of their subjects, are with the peace, order, liberty, and welfare of society, so that, were they universally acted upon, nothing would remain to be desired for the promotion of its peace and welfare ; it is also evident that in no part of the world have they been fully observed, and, indeed, in most countries they are, to this day, grossly trampled upon. A question then arises, How far does it consist with Christian submission to endeavour to remedy the evils of a government ?

On this difficult and often-controverted point we must proceed with caution, and with steady respect to the principles above drawn from the word of God ; and that the subject may be less entangled, it may be proper to leave out of our consideration, for the present, all questions relating to rival supreme powers, as in the case of a usurpation, and those which respect the duty of subjects when persecuted by their government on account of their religion.

Although government is enjoined by God, it appears to be left to men to judge in what form its purposes may, in certain circumstances, be most effectually accomplished. No direction is given on this subject in the Scriptures, which, however, seem most to favour monarchy. In point of fact, this form appears to have been the earliest, and succeeded immediately to the patriarchal or family governments of the most ancient times. These were founded upon nature ; but when two or more families were joined under one head, either for mutual

defence or for aggression, the monarchy was one of choice, or it resulted from a submission effected by conquest. Here, in many cases, a compact might, and in some instances did, come in, though differing in principle from "the social compact" of theoretical writers ; and this affords the only rational way of interpreting that real social compact which in some degree or other exists in all nations. In all cases where the patriarchal government was to be raised into a government common to many families, some considerable number of persons must have determined its form ; and they would have the right to place it upon such fundamental principles as might seem best, provided that such principles did not interfere with the duties made obligatory by God upon every sovereign power, and with the obligations of the subject to be governed by justice in mercy, and to be controlled from injuring others. Equally clear would be the right of the community, either *en masse* or by their natural heads or representatives, to agree upon a body of laws, which should be the standing and published expression of the will of the supreme power, that so the sovereign will on all main questions might not be subject to constant changes and the caprice of an individual ; and to oblige the Sovereign, as the condition of his office, to bind himself to observe these fundamental principles and laws of the State by solemn oath, which has been the practice among many nations, and especially those of the Gothic stock. It follows from hence, that whilst there is an ordination of God as to government, prior to the establishment of all governments, there is no ordination of a particular man or men to govern, nor any investment of families with hereditary right. There is no such ordination in Scripture, and we know that none takes place by particular revelation. God "setteth up one, and putteth down another," in virtue of his dominion over all things ; but he does this through men themselves as his controlled and often unconscious instruments. Hence, by St. Peter, in perfect consistency with St. Paul, the existing governments of the world are called "ordinances of men."—"Submit to every ordinance of man," or to every human creation or constitution, "for the Lord's sake ; whether to the King, as supreme," &c. Again :

as the wisdom to govern with absolute truth and justice, is not to be presumed to dwell in one man, however virtuous, so, in this state of things, the better to secure a salutary administration, there would be a right to make provision for this also, by Councils, Senates, Parliaments, Cortes, or similar institutions, vested with suitable powers, to forward, but not to obstruct, the exercise of good government. And, accordingly, we can trace the rudiments of these institutions in the earliest stages of most regular governments. These and similar arrangements are left to human care, prudence, and patriotism; and they are in perfect accordance with the principles of sovereign right as laid down in Scripture.

It is not, however, in the forming of a new State, that any great difficulty in morals arises. It comes in when either old States, originally ill-constituted, become inadapted to the purposes of good government in a new and altered condition of society, and the supreme power refuses to adapt itself to this new state of affairs; or when, in States originally well-constituted, encroachments upon the public liberties take place, and great misrule or neglect is chargeable upon the executive. The question in such cases is, whether resistance to the will of the supreme power is consistent with the subjects' duty?

To answer this, resistance must be divided into two kinds,—the resistance of opinion, and the resistance of force.

As to the first, the lawfulness, nay, even the duty of it must often be allowed; but under certain qualifying circumstances. As, 1. That this resistance of opposing and inculcating opinion is not directed against government, as such, however strict, provided it be just and impartial. 2. That it is not personal against the supreme Magistrate himself or his delegated authorities, but relates to public acts only. 3. That it springs not from mere theoretical preference of some new form of government to that actually existing, so that it has in it nothing practical. 4. That it proceeds not from a hasty, prejudiced, or malignant interpretation of the character, designs, and acts of a government. 5. That it is not factious; that is, not the result of attachment to parties, and of zeal to effect mere party objects, instead of the general good. 6. That it does not

respect the interests of a few only, or of a part of the community, or the mere local interests of some places in opposition to the just interests of other places. Under such guards as these, the respectful but firm expression of opinion, by speech, writing, petition, or remonstrance, is not only lawful, but is often an imperative duty, a duty for which hazards even must be run by those who endeavour to lead up public opinion to place itself against real encroachments upon the fundamental laws of a State, or any serious mal-administration of its affairs. The same conclusion may be maintained, under similar reserves, when the object is to improve a deficient and inadequate state of the supreme government. It is indeed specially requisite here, that the case should be a clear one; that it should be felt to be so by the great mass of those who with any propriety can be called "the public;" that it should not be urged beyond the necessity of the case; that the discussion of it should be temperate; that the change should be directly connected with an obvious public good, not otherwise to be accomplished. When these circumstances meet, there is manifestly no opposition to government as an ordinance of God; no blamable resistance "to the powers that be," since it is only proposed to place them in circumstances the more effectually to fulfil the duties of their office; nothing contrary, in fact, to the original compact, the object of which was the public benefit by rendering its government as efficient to promote the good of the State as possible, and which therefore necessarily supposed a liability to future modifications, when the fairly collected public sentiment, through the organs by which it usually expresses itself as to the public weal, required it. The least equivocal time, however, for proposing any change in what might be regarded as fundamental or constitutional in a form of government originally ill-settled, would be on the demise of the Sovereign, when the new stipulations might be offered to his successor, and very lawfully be imposed upon him.

Resistance by force may be divided into two kinds. The first is that milder one which belongs to constitutional States, that is, to those in which the compact between the supreme power and the people has been drawn out into express articles,



or is found in well-understood and received principles and ancient customs, imposing checks upon the sovereign will, and surrounding with guards the public liberty. The application of this controlling power, which, in this country, is placed in a Parliament, may have in it much of compulsion and force; as when Parliament rejects measures proposed by the Ministry, who are the organs of the will of the Sovereign; or when it refuses the usual supplies for the army and navy, until grievances are redressed. The proper or improper use of this power depends on the circumstances; but when not employed factiously, nor under the influence of private feelings, nor in subservience to unjustifiable popular clamour, or to popular demagogues; but advisedly and patriotically, in order to maintain the laws and customs of the kingdom, there is in it no infringement of the laws of Scripture as to the subjects' obedience. A compact exists; these are the established means of enforcing it; and to them the Sovereign has consented in his coronation oath.

The second kind is resistance by force of arms; and this at least must be established before its lawfulness, in any case, however extreme, can be proved, that it is so necessary to remedy some great public evil that milder means are totally inadequate,—a point which can very seldom be made out so clearly as to satisfy conscientious men. One of three cases must be supposed:—Either that the nation enjoys good institutions which it is enlightened enough to value:—Or that public liberty and other civil blessings are in gradual progress; but that a part only of the people are interested in maintaining and advancing them, whilst a great body of ignorant, prejudiced, and corrupt persons are on the side of the supreme power, and ready to lend themselves as instruments of its misrule and despotism:—Or, thirdly, that although the majority of the public are opposed to infringements on the constitution, yet the Sovereign, in attempting to change the fundamental principles of his compact, employs his mercenary troops against his subjects, or is aided and abetted by some foreign influence or power.

In the first case we have supposed, it does not seem possible

for unjust aggressions to be successful. The people are enlightened, and attached to their institutions ; and a prompt resistance of public opinion to the very first attempt of the supreme power must, in that case, be excited, and will be sufficient to arrest the evil. Accordingly, we find no instance of such a people being bereft of their liberty by their rulers. The danger in that state of society often lies on the other side. For as there is a natural inclination in men in power to extend their authority, so in subjects there is a strong disposition to resist or evade it ; and when the strength of public opinion is known in any country, there are never wanting persons, who, from vanity, faction, or interest, are ready to excite the passions and to corrupt the feelings of the populace, and to render them suspicious and unruly ; so that the difficulty which a true patriotism will often have to contend with, is, not to repress but to support a just authority. Licentiousness in the people has often, by a re-action, destroyed liberty, overthrowing the powers by which alone it is supported.

The second case supposes just opinions and feelings on the necessity of improving the civil institutions of a country to be in some progress ; that the evils of bad government are not only beginning to be felt, but to be extensively reflected upon ; and that the circumstances of a country are such that these considerations must force themselves upon the public mind, and advance the influence of public opinion in favour of beneficial changes. When this is the case, the existing evils must be gradually counteracted, and ultimately subdued, by the natural operation of all these circumstances. But if little impression has been made upon the public mind, resistance would be hopeless, and, even if not condemned by a higher principle, impolitic. The elements of society are not capable of being formed into a better system, or, if formed into it, cannot sustain it ; since no form of government, however good in theory, is reducible to beneficial practice without a considerable degree of public intelligence and public virtue. Even where society is partially prepared for beneficial changes, they may be hurried on too rapidly, that is, before sufficient previous impression has been made upon the public mind and character ; and then

nothing but mischief could result from a contest of force with a bad government. The effect would be, that the leaders of each party would appeal to an ignorant and bad populace, and the issue on either side would prove injurious to the advancement of civil improvement. If the despotic party should triumph, then, of course, all patriotism would be confounded with rebellion, and the efforts of moderate men to benefit their country be rendered for a long time hopeless. If the party seeking just reforms should triumph, they could only do so by the aid of those whose bad passions they had inflamed, as was the case in the French Revolution ; and then the result would be a violence which, it is true, overthrows one form of tyranny, but sets up another under which the best men perish. It cannot be doubted but that the sound public opinion in France, independent of all the theories in favour of republicanism which had been circulated among a people previously unprepared for political discussions, was sufficient to have effected, gradually, the most beneficial changes in its government ; and that the violence which was excited by blind passions threw back the real liberties of that country for many years. The same effect followed the parliamentary war, excited in our own country in the reign of Charles the First. The resistance of arms was in neither case to be justified, and it led to the worst crimes. The extreme case of necessity was not made out in either instance ; and the duty of subjects to their Sovereigns was grossly violated.

The third case supposed appears to be the only one in which the renunciation of allegiance is clearly justifiable ; because when the contract of a King with his people is not only violated obviously, repeatedly, and in opposition to petition and remonstrance, but a mercenary soldiery is employed against those whom he is bound to protect, and the fear of foreign force and compulsion is also suspended over them to compel the surrender of those rights which are accorded to them, both by the laws of God and the fundamental laws of the kingdom, the resistance of public feeling and sentiment, and that of the constitutional authorities, is then no longer available ; and such a Sovereign does, in fact, lose his rights

by a hostile denial of his duties, in opposition to his contract with his people. Such a case arose in this country at the Revolution of 1688 ; it was one so clear and indubitable, as to carry with it the calm and deliberate sense of the vast majority of all ranks of society ; and the whole was stamped with the character of a deliberate national act, not that of a faction. This resistance was doubtless justifiable. It involved no opposition to government, as such ; but was made for the purpose of serving the ends of good government, and the preservation of the very principles of the constitution. Nor did it imply any resistance to the existing power in any respect in which it was invested with any right, either by the laws of God, or those of the realm. It will, however, appear that here was a concurrence of circumstances which rendered the case one which can very rarely occur. It was not the act of a few individuals ; nor of mere theorists in forms of government ; nor was it the result of unfounded jealousy or alarm ; nor was it the work of either the populace on the one hand, or of an aristocratic faction on the other ; but of the people under their natural guides and leaders,—the nobility and gentry of the land ; nor were any private interests involved, the sole object being the public weal, and the maintenance of the laws. When such circumstances and principles meet, similar acts may be justified ; but in no instance of an equivocal character.

The question of a subject's duty in case of the existence of rival supreme powers, is generally a very difficult one, at least for some time. When the question of right which lies between them divides a nation, he who follows his conscientious opinion as to this point is doubtless morally safe, and he ought to follow it at the expense of any inconvenience. But when a power is settled *de facto* in the possession of the government, although the right of its claim should remain questionable in the minds of any, there appears a limit beyond which no man can be fairly required to withhold his full allegiance. Where that limit lies it is difficult to say, and individual conscience must have considerable latitude ; but perhaps the general rule may be, that when continued resistance would be manifestly contrary to the general welfare of the whole, it is safe to

conclude that He who changes the "powers that be" at his sovereign pleasure, has in his providence permitted or established a new order of things to which men are bound to conform.

Whether men are at liberty to resist their lawful Princes when persecuted by them for conscience' sake, is a question which brings in additional considerations; because of that patience and meekness which Christ has enjoined upon his followers when they suffer for his religion. When persecution falls upon a portion only of the subjects of a country, it appears their clear duty to submit, rather than to engage in plots and conspiracies against the persecuting power; practices which never can consist with Christian moderation and truth. But when it should fall upon a people constituting a distinct State, though united politically with some other, as in the case of the Waldenses, then the persecution, if carried to the violation of liberty, life, and property, would involve the violation of political rights also, and so nullify the compact which has guaranteed protection to all innocent subjects. A national resistance on these grounds would, for the foregoing reasons, stand on a very different basis.

No questions of this kind can come before a Christian man, however, without placing him under the necessity of considering the obligation of many duties of a much clearer character than, in almost any case, the duty of resistance to the government under which he lives can be. He is bound to avoid all intemperance and uncharitableness; and he is not, therefore, at liberty to become a factious man: He is forbidden to indulge malignity, and is restrained therefore from revenge: He is taught to be distrustful of his own judgment, and must only admit that of the wise and good to be influential with him; he must therefore avoid all association with low and violent men, the rabble of a State and their designing leaders: He is bound to submission to rulers in all cases where a superior duty cannot be fairly established; and he is warned of the danger of resistance to the power, as bringing after it divine condemnation, wherever the case is not clear, and not fully within the principles of the word of God. So circumstanced,

the allegiance of a Christian people is secured to all governors, and to all governments, except in very extreme cases which can very seldom arise in the judgment of any who respect the authority of the word of God; and thus this branch of Christian morality is established upon principles which at once uphold the majesty of Kings, and throw their shield over the liberties of their people; principles which, in the wisdom of God, beautifully entwine loyalty, freedom, and peace.

## PART FOURTH.

### THE INSTITUTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### *The Christian Church.*

THE church of Christ, in its largest sense, consists of all who have been baptized in the name of Christ, and who thereby make a visible profession of faith in his divine mission, and in all the doctrines taught by him and his inspired Apostles. In a stricter sense, it consists of those who are vitally united to Christ, as the members of the body to the head, and who, being thus imbued with spiritual life, walk no longer “after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Taken in either view, it is a visible society, bound to observe the laws of Christ, its sole Head and Lord. Visible fellowship with this church is the duty of all who profess faith in Christ; for in this, in part, consists that “confession of Christ before men,” on which so much stress is laid in the discourses of our Lord. It is obligatory on all who are convinced of the truth of Christianity to be baptized; and upon all thus baptized frequently to partake of the Lord’s supper, in order to testify their continued faith in that great and distinguishing doctrine of the religion of Christ, the redemption of the world by the sacrificial effusion of his blood, both of which suppose union with his church. The ends of this fellowship or association are, to proclaim our faith in the doctrine of Christ as divine in its origin, and necessary to salvation; to offer public prayers and thanksgivings to God through Christ, as the sole Mediator; to hear God’s word explained and enforced; and to place ourselves under that discipline which

consists in the enforcement of the laws of Christ, (which are the rules of the society called "the church,") upon the members, not merely by general exhortation, but by kind oversight, and personal injunction and admonition of its Ministers. All these flow from the original obligation to avow our faith in Christ, and our love to him.

The church of Christ being then a visible and permanent society, bound to observe certain rites, and to obey certain rules, the existence of government in it is necessarily supposed. All religious rites suppose order, all order direction and control, and these a directive and controlling power. Again : All laws are nugatory without enforcement, in the present mixed and imperfect state of society ; and all enforcement supposes an executive. If baptism be the door of admission into the church, some must judge of the fitness of candidates, and administrators of the rite must be appointed ; if the Lord's supper must be partaken of, the times and the mode are to be determined, the qualifications of communicants judged of, and the administration placed in suitable hands ; if worship must be social and public, here again there must be an appointment of times, an order, and an administration ; if the word of God is to be read and preached, then readers and preachers are necessary ; if the continuance of any one in the fellowship of Christians be conditional upon good conduct, so that the purity and credit of the church may be guarded, then the power of enforcing discipline must be lodged somewhere. Thus government flows necessarily from the very nature of the institution of the Christian church ; and since this institution has the authority of Christ and his Apostles, it is not to be supposed that its government was left unprovided for ; and if they have in fact made such a provision, it is no more a matter of mere option with Christians whether they will be subject to government in the church, than it is optional with them to confess Christ by becoming its members.

The nature of this government, and the persons to whom it is committed, are both points which we must briefly examine by the light of the holy Scriptures.

As to the first, it is wholly spiritual :—"My kingdom,"



says our Lord, "is not of this world." The church is a society founded upon faith, and united by mutual love, for the personal edification of its members in holiness, and for the religious benefit of the world. The nature of its government is thus determined ;—it is concerned only with spiritual objects. It cannot employ force to compel men into its pale ; for the only door of the church is faith, to which there can be no compulsion ;—"he that believeth and is baptized" becomes a member. It cannot inflict pains and penalties upon the disobedient and refractory, like civil governments ; for the only punitive discipline authorized in the New Testament, is comprised in admonition, reproof, sharp rebukes, and, finally, excision from the society. The last will be better understood if we consider the special relations in which true Christians stand to each other, and the duties resulting from them. They are members of one body, and are therefore bound to tenderness and sympathy ; they are the conjoint instructors of others, and are therefore to strive to be of one judgment ; they are brethren, and they are to love one another as such, that is, with an affection more special than that general good-will which they are commanded to bear to all mankind ; they are therefore to seek the intimacy of friendly society among themselves, and, except in the ordinary and courteous intercourse of life, they are bound to keep themselves separate from the world ; they are enjoined to do good unto all men, but "specially to them that are of the household of faith ;" and they are forbidden "to eat" at the Lord's table with immoral persons, that is, with those who, although they continue their Christian profession, dishonour it by their practice. With these relations of Christians to each other and to the world, and their correspondent duties before our minds, we may easily interpret the nature of that extreme discipline which is vested in the church. "Persons who will not hear the church" are to be held "as heathen men and publicans," as those who are not members of it ; that is, they are to be separated from it, and regarded as of "the world," quite out of the range of the above-mentioned relations of Christians to each other, and their correspondent duties ; but still, like "heathen men and publicans," they are

to be the objects of pity, and general benevolence. Nor is this extreme discipline to be hastily inflicted before "a first and second admonition," nor before those who are "spiritual" have attempted "to restore a brother overtaken by a fault;" and when the "wicked person" is "put away," still the door is to be kept open for his reception again upon repentance. The true excommunication of the Christian church is, therefore, a merciful and considerate separation of an incorrigible offender from the body of Christians, without any infliction of civil pains or penalties. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye have received from us." (2 Thess. iii. 6.) "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump." (1 Cor. v. 7.) "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no not to eat." (1 Cor. v. 11.) This then is the moral discipline which is imperative upon the church of Christ; and its government is criminally defective whenever it is not enforced. On the other hand, the disabilities and penalties which established churches in different places have connected with these sentences of excommunication, have no countenance at all in Scripture, and are wholly inconsistent with the spiritual character and ends of the Christian association.

As to the second point,—the persons to whom the government of the church is committed, it is necessary to consider the composition, so to speak, of the primitive church, as stated in the New Testament.

A full enunciation of these offices we find in Ephesians iv. 11, 12: "And he gave some, Apostles; and some, Prophets; and some, Evangelists; and some, Pastors and Teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Of these the office of Apostle is allowed by all to have been confined to those immediately commissioned by Christ to witness the fact of his miracles, and of his resurrection from the dead, and to reveal the complete system of Christian doctrine and duty; confirming their extra-

ordinary mission by miracles wrought by themselves. If by "Prophets" we are to understand persons who foretold future events, then the office was, from its very nature, extraordinary, and the gift of prophecy has passed away with the other miraculous endowments of the first age of Christianity. If, with others, we understand that these Prophets were extraordinary Teachers raised up until the churches were settled under permanent qualified instructors; still the office was temporary. The Evangelists are generally understood to be assistants of the Apostles, who acted under their especial authority and direction. Of this number were Timothy and Titus; and as the Apostle Paul directed them to ordain Bishops or Presbyters in the several churches, but gave them no authority to ordain successors to themselves in their particular office as Evangelists, it is clear that the Evangelists must also be reckoned among the number of extraordinary and temporary Ministers suited to the first age of Christianity. Whether by "Pastors and Teachers" two offices be meant, or one, has been disputed. The change in the mode of expression seems to favour the latter view, and so the text is interpreted by St. Jerome, and St. Augustine; but the point is of little consequence. A Pastor was a Teacher; although every Teacher might not be a Pastor, but in many cases be confined to the office of subordinate instruction, whether as an expounder of doctrine, a catechist, or even a more private instructor of those who as yet were unacquainted with the first principles of the Gospel of Christ. The term "Pastor" implies the duties both of instruction and of government, of feeding and of ruling the flock of Christ; and, as the Presbyters or Bishops were ordained in the several churches both by the Apostles and Evangelists, and rules are left by St. Paul as to their appointment, there can be no doubt but that these are the "Pastors" spoken of in the Epistle to the Ephesians, and that they were designed to be the permanent Ministers of the church; and that with them both the government of the church, and the performance of its leading religious services, were deposited. Deacons had the charge of the gifts and offerings for charitable purposes, although, as appears from Justin Martyr, not in every instance; for he

speaks of the weekly oblations as being deposited with the chief Minister, and distributed by him.

Whether Bishops and Presbyters be designations of the same office, or these appellatives express two distinct sacred orders, is a subject which has been controverted by Episcopalians and Presbyterians with much warmth; and whoever would fully enter into their arguments from Scripture and antiquity, must be referred to this controversy, which is too large to be here more than glanced at. The argument drawn by the Presbyterians from the promiscuous use of these terms in the New Testament, to prove that the same order of Ministers is expressed by them, appears incontrovertible. When St. Paul, for instance, sends for the Elders, or Presbyters, of the church of Ephesus to meet him at Miletus, he thus charges them, "Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseers," or Bishops. That here the Elders or Presbyters are called "Bishops," cannot be denied; and the very office assigned to them, to "feed the church of God," and the injunction, to "take heed to the flock," show that the office of Elder or Presbyter is the same as that of "Pastor" in the passage just quoted from the Epistle to the Ephesians. St. Paul directs Titus to "ordain Elders," Presbyters, "in every city," and then adds, as a directory of ordination, "A Bishop must be blameless," &c., plainly marking the same office by these two convertible appellations. Bishops and Deacons are the only classes of Ministers addressed in the Epistle to the Philippians; and if the Presbyters were not understood to be included under the term "Bishops," the omission of any notice of this order of Ministers is not to be accounted for. As the Apostles, when not engaged in their own extraordinary vocation, appear to have filled the office of stated Ministers in those churches in which they occasionally resided for considerable periods of time, they sometimes called themselves Presbyters. "The Elder," Presbyter, "unto the elect lady." (2 John 1.) "The Elders," Presbyters, "which are among you, I exhort, who am also an Elder," Presbyter; and from what follows, the highest offices of teaching and government in the church are represented as vested in the

Presbyters: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof." There seems, therefore, to be the most conclusive evidence, from the New Testament, that, after the extraordinary ministry vested in Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists, as mentioned by St. Paul, had ceased, the feeding and oversight, that is, the teaching and government, of the churches devolved upon an order of men indiscriminately called "Pastors," "Presbyters," and "Bishops;" the two latter names growing into most frequent use; and with this the testimony of the apostolical Fathers, so far as their writings are acknowledged to be free from later interpolations, agrees.

It is not indeed to be doubted, that, at a very early period, in some instances probably from the time of the Apostles themselves, a distinction arose between Bishops and Presbyters; and the whole strength of the cause of the Episcopalians lies in this fact. Still this gives not the least sanction to the notion of Bishops being a superior order of Ministers to Presbyters, invested, in virtue of that order, and by divine right, with powers of government both over Presbyters and people, and possessing exclusively the authority of ordaining to the sacred offices of the church. As little too will that ancient distinction be found to prove anything in favour of diocesan Episcopacy, which is of still later introduction.

Could it be made clear that the power of ordaining to the ministry was given to Bishops to the exclusion of Presbyters, that would indeed go far to prove the former a distinct and superior order of Ministers in their original appointment. But there is no passage in the New Testament which gives this power at all to Bishops, as thus distinguished from Presbyters; whilst all the examples of ordination which it exhibits are confined to Apostles, to Evangelists, or to Presbyters, in conjunction with them. St. Paul, in 2 Timothy i. 6, says, "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands;" but in 1 Timothy iv. 14, he says, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery;" which two passages, referring, as they plainly do, to the same event, the setting

apart of Timothy for the ministry, show that the Presbytery were associated with St. Paul in the office of ordination, and further prove that the exclusive assumption of this power, as by divine right, by Bishops, is an aggression upon the rights of Presbyters, for which not only can no scriptural authority be pleaded, but which is in direct opposition to it.

The early distinction made between Bishops and Presbyters may be easily accounted for, without allowing this assumed distinction of order. In some of the churches mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, the Apostles ordained several Elders or Presbyters, partly to supply the present need, and to provide for the future increase of believers, as it is observed by Clemens in his Epistle. Another reason would also urge this:—Before the building of spacious edifices for the assemblies of the Christians living in one city, and in its neighbourhood, in common, their meetings for public worship must necessarily have been held in different houses or rooms obtained for the purpose; and to each assembly an Elder would be requisite for the performance of worship. That these Elders or Presbyters had the power of government in the churches cannot be denied, because it is expressly assigned to them in Scripture. It was inherent in their pastoral office; and “the Elders that rule well” were to be “counted worthy of double honour.” A number of Elders, therefore, being ordained by the Apostles to one church, gave rise to the *cætus presbyterorum*, in which assembly the affairs of the church were attended to, and measures taken for the spread of the Gospel, by the aid of the common counsel and efforts of the whole. This meeting of Presbyters would naturally lead to the appointment, whether by seniority or by election, of one to preside over the proceedings of this assembly for the sake of order; and to him was given the title of “angel” of the church, and “Bishop,” by way of eminence. The latter title came in time to be exclusively used of the presiding Elder, because of that special oversight imposed upon him by his office, and which, as churches were raised up in the neighbourhood of the larger cities, would also naturally be extended over them. Independently of his fellow Presbyters, however, he did nothing.

The whole of this arrangement shows, that in those particulars in which they were left free by the Scriptures, the primitive Christians adopted that arrangement for the government of the church which promised to render it most efficient for the maintenance of truth and piety ; but they did not at this early period set up that unscriptural distinction of order between Bishops and Presbyters, which obtained afterwards. Hence Jerome, even in the fourth century, contends against this doctrine, and says, that before there were parties in religion, churches were governed *communi consilio presbyterorum* ; but that afterwards it became a universal practice, founded upon experience of its expediency, that one of the Presbyters should be chosen by the rest to be the head, and that the care of the church should be committed to him. He therefore exhorts Presbyters to remember that they are subject by the custom of the church to him that presides over them ; and reminds Bishops that they are greater than Presbyters, rather by custom than by the appointment of the Lord ; and that the church ought still to be governed in common. The testimony of antiquity also shows, that, after Episcopacy had very greatly advanced its claims, the Presbyters continued to be associated with the Bishop in the management of the affairs of the church.

Much light is thrown upon the constitution of the primitive churches, by recollecting that they were formed very much upon the model of the Jewish synagogues. We have already seen that the mode of public worship in the primitive church was taken from the synagogue service, and so also was its arrangement of offices. Each synagogue had its Rulers, Elders, or Presbyters, of whom one was the angel of the church, or Minister of the synagogue, who superintended the public service ; directed those that read the Scriptures, and offered up the prayers, and blessed the people. The President of the council of Elders or Rulers was called, by way of eminence, the “Ruler of the synagogue ;” and in some places, as Acts xiii. 15, we read of these Rulers in the plural number ; a sufficient proof that one was not elevated in order above the rest. The angel of the church, and the Minister of the synagogue, might be the same as he who was invested with the office of

President; or these offices might be held by others of the Elders. Lightfoot, indeed, states that the Rulers in each synagogue were three, whilst the Presbyters or Elders were ten. To this council of grave and wise men, the affairs of the synagogue, both as to worship and discipline, were committed. In the synagogue they sat by themselves in a semicircle, and the people before them, face to face. This was the precise form in which the Bishop and Presbyters used to sit in the primitive churches. The description of the worship of the synagogue by a Jewish Rabbi, and that of the primitive church by early Christian writers, presents an obvious correspondence. "The Elders," says Maimonides, "sit with their faces towards the people, and their backs to the place where the law is deposited; and all the people sit rank before rank; so the faces of all the people are towards the sanctuary, and towards the Elders; and when the Minister of the sanctuary standeth up to prayer, he standeth with his face towards the sanctuary, as do the rest of the people." In the same order the first Christians sat with their faces towards the Bishops and Presbyters, first to hear the Scriptures read by the proper reader; "then," says Justin Martyr, "the reader sitting down, the President of the assembly stands up and makes a sermon of instruction and exhortation; after this is ended, we all stand up to prayers; prayers being ended, the bread, wine, and water are all brought forth; then the President again praying and praising to his utmost ability, the people testify their consent by saying, Amen."\* "Here we have the Scriptures read by one appointed for that purpose, as in the synagogue; after which follows the word of exhortation by the President of the assembly, who answers to the Minister of the synagogue; after this, public prayers are performed by the same person; then the solemn acclamation of Amen by the people, which was the undoubted practice of the synagogue."† Ordination of Presbyters or Elders is also from the Jews. Their Priests were not ordained, but succeeded to their office by birth; but the Rulers and Elders of the synagogue received ordination by imposition of hands and prayer.

\* Apol. 2.

† Stillingfleet's Irenicum.



Such was the model which the Apostles followed in providing for the future regulation of the churches they had raised up. They took it, not from the temple and its Priesthood ; for that was typical, and was then passing away. But they found in the institution of synagogues a plan admirably adapted to the simplicity and purity of Christianity, one to which some of the first converts in most places were accustomed, and which was capable of being applied to the new dispensation without danger of Judaizing. It secured the assembling of the people on the Sabbath, the reading of the Scriptures, the preaching of sermons, and the offering of public prayer and thanksgiving. It provided, too, for the government of the church by a council of Presbyters, ordained solemnly to their office by imposition of hands and prayer ; and it allowed of that presidency of one Presbyter chosen by the others, which was useful for order and for unity, and by which age, piety, and gifts might preserve their proper influence in the church. The advance from this state of scriptural Episcopacy to Episcopacy under another form was the work of a later age.

When the Gospel made its way into towns and villages, the concerns of the Christians in these places naturally fell under the cognizance and direction of the Bishops of the neighbouring cities. Thus dioceses were gradually formed, comprehending districts of country, of different extent. These dioceses were originally called *παροικιαί*, “parishes,” and the word *διοικησις*, “diocese,” was not used in its modern sense till at least the fourth century : And when we find Ignatius describing it as the duty of a Bishop, “to speak to each member of the church separately, to seek out all by name, even the slaves of both sexes, and to advise every one of the flock in the affair of marriage,” dioceses, as one observes, must have been very limited, or the labour inconceivably great.

“As Christianity increased and overspread all parts, and especially the cities of the empire, it was found necessary yet farther to enlarge the episcopal office ; and as there was commonly a Bishop in every great city, so in the metropolis, (as the Romans called it,) the mother-city of every province, (wherein they had courts of civil judicature,) there was an

Archbishop or a Metropolitan, who had ecclesiastical jurisdiction over all the churches within that province. He was superior to all the Bishops within those limits ; to him it belonged to ordain or to ratify the elections and ordination of all the Bishops within his province, insomuch that without his confirmation they were looked upon as null and void. Once at least every year he was to summon the Bishops under him to a synod, to inquire into and direct the ecclesiastical affairs within that province ; to inspect the lives and manners, the opinions and principles, of his Bishops ; to admonish, reprove, and suspend them that were disorderly and irregular ; if any controversies or contentions happened between any of them, he was to have the hearing and determination of them ; and indeed no matter of moment was done within the whole province, without first consulting him in the case. When this office of Metropolitan first began, I find not ; only this we are sure of, that the Council of Nice, settling the just rights and privileges of metropolitan Bishops, speaks of them as a thing of ancient date, ushering in the canon with an *αρχαία ἐβη κρατεῖται*, ‘Let ancient customs still take place.’ The original of the institution seems to have been partly to comply with the people’s occasions, who oft resorted to the metropolis for despatch of their affairs, and so might fitly discharge their civil and ecclesiastical both at once ; and partly because of the great confluence of people to that city ; that the Bishop of it might have pre-eminence above the rest, and the honour of the church bear some proportion to that of the State.

“ After this sprung up another branch of the episcopal office, as much superior to that of Metropolitans, as theirs was to ordinary Bishops ; these were called ‘Primates’ and ‘Patriarchs,’ and had jurisdiction over many provinces. For the understanding of this, it is necessary to know, that, when Christianity came to be fully settled in the world, they contrived to model the external government of the church, as near as might be, to the civil government of the Roman empire ; the parallel is most exactly drawn by an ingenious person of our own nation ; the sum of it is this :—The whole empire of Rome was divided into thirteen ‘dioceses,’ (so they called

those divisions,) these contained about one hundred and twenty provinces and every province several cities. Now, as in every city there was a temporal Magistrate for the executing of justice, and keeping the peace, both for that city, and the towns round about it; so was there also a Bishop for spiritual order and government, whose jurisdiction was of like extent and latitude. In every province there was a Proconsul or President, whose seat was usually at the metropolis, or chief city of the province; and hither all inferior cities came for judgment in matters of importance. And in proportion to this there was in the same city an Archbishop or Metropolitan, for matters of ecclesiastical concernment. Lastly, in every diocese the Emperors had their *Vicarii* or Lieutenants, who dwelt in the principal city of the diocese, where all imperial edicts were published, and from whence they were sent abroad into the several provinces, and where was the chief tribunal where all causes, not determinable elsewhere, were decided. And, to answer this, there was in the same city a Primate, to whom the last determination of all appeals from all the provinces in differences of the Clergy, and the sovereign care of all the dioceses for sundry points of spiritual government, did belong. This, in short, is the sum of the account which that learned man gives of this matter. So that the Patriarch, as superior to the Metropolitans, was to have under his jurisdiction not any one single province, but a whole diocese, (in the old Roman notion of that word,) consisting of many provinces. To him belonged the ordination of all the Metropolitans that were under him, as also the summoning them to Councils, the correcting and reforming the misdemeanors they were guilty of; and from his judgment and sentence, in things properly within his cognizance, there lay no appeal. To this I shall only add what Salmasius has noted, that as the diocese that was governed by the *Vicarius* had many provinces under it, so the *Præfectus Prætorio* had several dioceses under him; and in proportion to this, probably, it was that Patriarchs were first brought in, who, if not superior to Primates in jurisdiction and power, were yet in honour, by reason of the dignity of those cities where their sees were

fixed, as at Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem."\*

Thus diocesan Bishops, Metropolitans, Primate, Patriarchs, and finally the Pope, came in ; which offices are considered as corruptions or improvements ; as dictated by the necessities of the church, or as instances of worldly ambition ; as of divine right, or from Satan ; according to the different views of those who have written on such subjects. As to them all it may, however, be said, that, so far as they are pleaded for as of divine right, they have no support from the New Testament ; and if they are placed upon the only ground on which they can be reasonably discussed, that of necessity and good polity, they must be tried by circumstances, and their claims of authority be so defined that it may be known how far they are compatible with those principles with which the New Testament abounds, although it contains no formal plan of church government. The only scriptural objection to Episcopacy, as it is understood in modern times, is its assumption of superiority of order, of an exclusive right to govern the Pastors as well as the flock, and to ordain to the Christian ministry. These exclusive powers are by the New Testament nowhere granted to Bishops in distinction from Presbyters. The government of Pastors, as well as people, was at first in the assembly of Presbyters, who were individually accountable to that ruling body, and that whether they had a President or not. So also as to ordination ; it was a right in each, although used by several together, for better security ; and even when the presence of a Bishop came to be thought necessary to the validity of ordination, the Presbytery were not excluded.

As for the argument from the succession of Bishops from the times of the Apostles, could the fact be made out, it would only trace diocesan Bishops to the Bishops of parishes ; those, to the Bishops of single churches ; and Bishops of a supposed superior order, to Bishops who never thought themselves more than presiding Presbyters, *primi inter pares*. This, therefore, would only show that an unscriptural assumption of distinct

\* Cave's Primitive Christianity.

orders has been made, which that succession, if established, would refute. But the succession itself is imaginary. Even Epiphanius, a Bishop of the fourth century, gives this account of things : “ That the Apostles were not able to settle all things at once. But according to the number of believers, and the qualifications for the different offices which those whom they found appeared to possess, they appointed in some places only a Bishop and Deacons ; in others, Presbyters and Deacons ; in others, a Bishop, Presbyters, and Deacons ; ”—a statement fatal to the argument from succession. As for the pretended catalogues of Bishops of the different churches from the days of the Apostles, exhibited by some ecclesiastical writers, they are filled up by forgeries and inventions of later times. Eusebius, more honest, begins his catalogue with declaring, that it is not easy to say who were the disciples of the Apostles that were appointed to feed the churches which they planted, excepting only those whom we read of in the writings of St. Paul.

Whether Episcopacy may not be a matter of prudential regulation, is another question. We think it often may ; and that churches are quite at liberty to adopt this mode, provided they maintain St. Jerome’s distinction, that “ Bishops are greater than Presbyters rather by custom than by appointment of the Lord, and that still the church ought to be governed in common,” that is, by Bishops and Presbyters united. It was on this ground that Luther placed Episcopacy,—as useful, though not of divine right ; it was by admitting this liberty in churches, that Calvin and other Divines of the reformed churches allowed Episcopacy and diocesan churches to be lawful, there being nothing to forbid such an arrangement in Scripture, when placed on the principle of expediency. Some Divines of the English Church have chosen to defend its Episcopacy wholly upon this ground, as alone tenable ; and, admitting that it is safest to approach as near as possible to primitive practice, have proposed the restoration of Presbyters as a senate to the Bishop, the contraction of dioceses, the placing of Bishops in all great towns, and the holding of provincial synods ;—thus raising the Presbyters to their original rank, as the Bishop’s

“Compresbyters,” as Cyprian himself calls them, both in government, and in ordinations.

As to that kind of Episcopacy which trenches upon no scriptural principle, much depends upon circumstances, and the forms in which Christian churches exist. When a church composes but one congregation, the Minister is unquestionably a scriptural Bishop; but he is, and can be, only Bishop of the flock, *Episcopus gregis*. Of this kind, it appears from the extract given above from Epiphanius, were some of the primitive churches, existing, probably, in the smaller and more remote places. Where a number of Presbyters were ordained to one church, these would, in their common assembly, have the oversight and government of each other as well as of the people; and, in this their collective capacity, they would be *Episcopi gregis et Pastorum*. In this manner Episcopacy, as implying the oversight and government both of Ministers and their flocks, exists in Presbyterian churches, and in all others, by whatever name they are called, where Ministers are subject to the discipline of assemblies of Ministers who admit to the ministry by joint consent, and censure or remove those who are so appointed. When the ancient Presbyteries elected a Bishop, he might remain, as he appears to have done for some time, the mere President of the assembly of Presbyters, and their organ of administration; or be constituted, as afterwards, a distinct governing power, although assisted by the advice of his Presbyters. He was then in person an *Episcopus gregis et Pastorum*, and his official powers gave rise at length to the unfounded distinction of superior order. But, abating this false principle, even diocesan Episcopacy may be considered, in many possible associations of churches throughout a province, or a whole country, as an arrangement, in some circumstances, of a wise and salutary nature. Nor do the evils which arose in the church of Christ appear so attributable to this form of government as to that too intimate connexion of the church with the State, which gave to the former a political character, and took it from under the salutary control of public opinion,—an evil greatly increased by the subsequent destruction of religious liberty, and the coercive interferences of the civil Magistrate.

At the same time, it may be very well questioned, whether any Presbyters could lawfully surrender into the hands of a Bishop their own rights of government and ordination without that security for their due administration which arises from the accountability of the administrator. That these are rights which it is not imperative upon the person possessing them to exercise individually, appears to have been the judgment of the earliest antiquity, because the assembly of Presbyters, which was probably co-existent with the ordination of several Presbyters to one church by the Apostles, necessarily placed the exercise of the office of each under the direction and control of all. When, therefore, a Bishop was chosen by the Presbyters, and invested with the government, and the power of granting orders, so long as the Presbyters remained his council, and nothing was done but by their concurrence, they were still parties to the mode in which their own powers were exercised, and were justifiable in placing the administration in the hands of one who was still dependent upon themselves. In this way they probably thought that their own powers might be most efficiently and usefully exercised. Provincial and national synods or councils, exercising a proper superintendence over Bishops when made even more independent of their Presbyters than was the case in the best periods of the primitive church, might also, if meeting frequently and regularly, and as a part of an ecclesiastical system, afford the same security for good administration, and might justify the surrender of the exercise of their powers by the Presbyters. But when that surrender was formerly made, or is at any time made now in the constitution of churches, to Bishops, or to those bearing a similar office however designated, without security and control, either by making that office temporary and elective, or by the constitution of synods or assemblies of the Ministers of a large and united body of Christians for the purpose of supreme government, an office is created which has not only no countenance in Scripture, (that of a Bishop independent of Presbyters,) but one which implies an unlawful surrender of those powers, on the part of the latter, with which they were invested, not for their own sakes, but for the benefit of the church; and

which they could have no authority to divest themselves of and to transfer, without retaining the power of counselling and controlling the party charged with the administration of them. In other words, Presbyters have a right, under proper regulations, to appoint another to administer for them, or to consent to such an arrangement when they find it already existing; but they have no power to divest themselves of these rights and duties absolutely. If these principles be sound, modern Episcopacy, in many churches, is objectionable in other respects than as it assumes an unscriptural distinction of order.

The following is a liberal concession on the subject of Episcopacy, from a strenuous defender of that form of government as it exists in the Church of England:—

“It is not contended that the Bishops, Priests, and Deacons of England are at present precisely the same that Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons were in Asia Minor, seventeen hundred years ago. We only maintain that there have always been Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, in the Christian church, since the days of the Apostles, with different powers and functions, it is allowed, in different countries and at different periods; but the general principles and duties which have respectively characterized these clerical orders, have been essentially the same at all times, and in all places; and the variations which they have undergone, have only been such as have ever belonged to all persons in public situations, whether civil or ecclesiastical, and which are indeed inseparable from every thing in which mankind are concerned in this transitory and fluctuating world.

“I have thought it right to take this general view of the ministerial office, and to make these observations upon the clerical orders subsisting in this kingdom, for the purpose of pointing out the foundation and principles of church authority, and of showing that our ecclesiastical establishment is as nearly conformable, as change of circumstances will permit, to the practice of the primitive church. But, though I flatter myself that I have proved Episcopacy to be an apostolical institution, yet I readily acknowledge that there is no precept in the New Testament which commands that every church should be



governed by Bishops. No church can exist without some government ; but though there must be rules and orders for the proper discharge of the offices of public worship, though there must be fixed regulations concerning the appointment of Ministers, and though a subordination among them is expedient in the highest degree, yet it does not follow that all these things must be precisely the same in every Christian country ; they may vary with the other varying circumstances of human society, with the extent of a country, the manners of its inhabitants, the nature of its civil government, and many other peculiarities which might be specified. As it has not pleased our Almighty Father to prescribe any particular form of civil government for the security of temporal comforts to his rational creatures, so neither has he prescribed any particular form of ecclesiastical polity as absolutely necessary to the attainment of eternal happiness. But he has, in the most explicit terms, enjoined obedience to all Governors, whether civil or ecclesiastical, and, whatever may be their denomination, as essential to the character of a true Christian. Thus the Gospel only lays down general principles, and leaves the application of them to men as free agents.”\*

Bishop Tomline, however, and the high Episcopalians of the Church of England, contend for an original distinction in the office and order of Bishops and Presbyters ; in which notion they are contradicted by one who may be truly called the Founder of the Church of England, Archbishop Cranmer, who says, “The Bishops and Priests were at one time, and were not two things ; but both one office in the beginning of Christ’s religion.”†

On the subject of the church itself, opinions as opposite or varying as possible have been held, down from that of the Papists, who contend for its visible unity throughout the world under a visible head, to that of the Independents, who consider the universal church as composed of congregational churches, each perfect in itself, and entirely independent of every other.

\* Bishop Tomline’s Elements.

† Stillingfleet’s Irenicum, p. 392.

The first opinion is manifestly contradicted by the language of the Apostles, who, whilst they teach that there is but one church, composed of believers throughout the world, think it not at all inconsistent with this to speak of "the churches of Judea," "of Achaia," "the seven churches of Asia," "the church at Ephesus," &c. Among themselves the apostles had no common head ; but planted churches, and gave directions for their government, in most cases without any apparent correspondence with each other. The Popish doctrine is certainly not found in their writings ; and so far were they from making provision for the government of this one supposed church, by the appointment of one visible and exclusive head, that they provide for the future government of the respective churches raised up by them in a totally different manner, that is, by the ordination of Ministers for each church, who are indifferently called Bishops, and Presbyters, and Pastors. The only unity of which they speak is the unity of the whole church in Christ, the invisible Head, by faith ; and the unity produced by fervent love towards each other. Nor has the Popish doctrine of the visible unity of the church any countenance from early antiquity. The best ecclesiastical historians have showed, that, through the greater part of the second century, "the Christian churches were independent of each other. Each Christian assembly was a little state, governed by its own laws, which were either enacted, or at least approved, by the society. But in process of time, all the churches of a province were formed into one large ecclesiastical body, which, like confederate states, assembled at certain times in order to deliberate about the common interests of the whole." \* So far indeed this union of churches appears to have been a wise and useful arrangement, although afterwards it was carried to an injurious extreme, until finally it gave birth to the assumptions of the Bishop of Rome, as universal Bishop ; a claim, however, which, when most successful, was but partially submitted to, the eastern churches having always maintained their independence. No very large association of churches of any kind

\* Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, Cent. 2, chap. ii.

existed till towards the close of the second century, which sufficiently refutes the Papal argument from antiquity.

The independence of the early Christian churches does not, however, appear to have resembled that of the churches which, in modern times, are called "Independent." During the lives of the Apostles and Evangelists they were certainly subject to their counsel and control, which proves that the independency of separate societies was not the first form of the church. It may, indeed, be allowed, that some of the smaller and more insulated churches might, after the death of the Apostles and Evangelists, retain this form for some considerable time; but the larger churches, in the chief cities, and those planted in populous neighbourhoods, had many Presbyters, and, as the members multiplied, they had several separate assemblies or congregations, yet all under the same common government. And when churches were raised up in the neighbourhood of cities, the appointment of *Chorepiscopi*, or country Bishops, and of visiting Presbyters, both acting under the Presbytery of the city, with its Bishop at its head, is sufficiently in proof, that the ancient churches, especially the larger and more prosperous of them, existed in that form which, in modern times, we should call a religious connexion, subject to a common government. This appears to have arisen out of the very circumstance of the increase of the church, through the zeal of the first Christians; and in the absence of all direction by the Apostles, that every new society of believers raised should be formed into an independent church, it was doubtless much more in the spirit of the very first discipline exercised by the Apostles and Evangelists, (when none of the churches were independent, but remained under the government of those who had been chiefly instrumental in raising them up,) to place themselves under a common inspection, and to unite the weak with the strong, and the newly converted with those who were "in Christ before them." There was also in this greater security afforded both for the continuance of wholesome doctrine, and of godly discipline.

The persons appointed to feed and govern the church of Christ being, then, as we have seen, those who are called

“Pastors,” a word which imports both care and government, two other subjects claim our attention ;—the share which the body of the people have in their own government by their Pastors, and the objects towards which the power of government, thus established in the church, is legitimately directed.

As to the first, some preliminary observations may be necessary.

1. When churches are professedly connected with, and exclusively patronized and upheld by, the State, questions of ecclesiastical government arise, which are of greater perplexity and difficulty than when they are left upon their original ground, as voluntary and spiritual associations. The State will not exclusively recognise Ministers without maintaining some control over their functions ; and will not lend its aid to enforce the canons of an established church, without reserving to itself some right of appeal, or of interposition. Hence a contest between the civil and ecclesiastical powers often springs up, and one at least generally feels itself to be fettered by the other. When an established church is perfectly tolerant, and the State allows freedom of dissent and separation from it without penalties, these evils are much mitigated. But it is not my design to consider a church as at all allied with the State ; but as deriving nothing from it except protection, and that general countenance which the influence of a government, professing Christianity and recognising its laws, must afford.

2. The only view in which the sacred writers of the New Testament appear to have contemplated the churches, was that of associations founded upon conviction of the truth of Christianity, and the obligatory nature of the commands of Christ. They considered the Pastors as dependent for their support upon the free contributions of the people ; and the people as bound to sustain, love, and obey them in all things lawful, that is, in all things agreeable to the doctrine they had received in the Scriptures, and, in things indifferent, to pay respectful deference to them. They enjoined it upon the Pastors to rule well, diligently, and with fidelity, in executing the directions they had given them ; to silence all teachers

of false doctrines, and their adherents ; to reprove unruly and immoral members of the church, and, if incorrigible, to put them away. On the other hand, should any of their Pastors or Teachers err in doctrine, the people are enjoined not "to receive them," to "turn away" from them, and not even to bid them "God speed." The rule which forbids Christians "to eat," that is, to communicate at the Lord's table, with an immoral brother, held, of course, good, when that brother was a Pastor. Thus Pastors were put by them under the influence of the public opinion of the churches ; and the remedy of separating from them, in manifest defections of doctrine and morals, was afforded to the sound members of a church, should no power exist, able or inclined to silence the offending Pastor and his party. In all this, principles were recognised, which, had they not been in future times lost sight of or violated, would have done much, perhaps every thing, to preserve some parts of the church, at least, in soundness of faith, and purity of manners. A perfect religious liberty is always supposed by the Apostles to exist among Christians ; no compulsion of the civil power is any where assumed by them as the basis of their advices or directions ; no binding of the members to one church, without liberty to join another, by any ties but those involved in moral considerations, of sufficient weight, however, to prevent the evils of faction and schism. It was this which created a natural and competent check upon the Ministers of the church ; for being only sustained by the opinion of the churches, they could not but have respect to it ; and it was this which gave to the sound part of a fallen church the advantage of renouncing, upon sufficient and well-weighed grounds, their communion with it, and of kindling up the light of a pure ministry and a holy discipline, by forming a separate association, bearing its testimony against errors in doctrine, and failures in practice. Nor is it to be conceived that, had this simple principle of perfect religious liberty been left unviolated through subsequent ages, the church could ever have become so corrupt, or with such difficulty and slowness have been recovered from its fall. This ancient Christian liberty has happily been restored in a few parts of Christendom.

3. In places where now the communion with particular churches, as to human authority, is perfectly voluntary, and liberty of conscience is unfettered, it often happens that questions of church government are argued on the assumption that the governing power in such churches is of the same character, and tends to the same results, as where it is connected with civil influence, and is upheld by the power of the State.

Nothing can be more fallacious, and no instrument has been so powerful as this in the hands of the restless and factious to delude the unwary. Those who possess the governing power in such churches are always under the influence of public opinion to an extent unfelt in establishments. They can enforce nothing felt to be oppressive to the members in general, without dissolving the society itself; and their utmost power extends to excision from the body, which, unlike the sentences of excommunication in State churches, is wholly unconnected with civil penalties. If, then, a resistance is created to any regulations among the major part of any such religious community, founded on a sense of their injurious operation, or to the manner of their enforcement; and if that feeling be the result of a settled conviction, and not the effervescence of temporary mistake and excitement, a change must necessarily ensue, or the body at large be disturbed or dissolved: If, on the other hand, this feeling be the work of a mere faction, partial tumults or separation may take place, and great moral evil may result to the factious parties, but the body will retain its communion, which will be a sufficient proof that the governing power has been the subject of ungrounded and uncharitable attack, since otherwise the people at large must have felt the evils of the general regulations or administration complained of. The very terms often used in the grand controversy arising out of the struggle for the establishment of religious liberty with national and intolerant churches, are not generally appropriate to such discussions as may arise in voluntary religious societies, although they are often employed, either carelessly or *ad captandum*, to serve the purposes of faction.

4. It is also an important general observation, that, in settling the government of a church, there are pre-existent laws of Christ, which it is not in the option of any to receive or to reject. Under whatever form the governing power is arranged, it is so bound to execute all the rules left by Christ and his Apostles, as to doctrine, worship, the sacraments, and discipline, honestly interpreted, that it is not at liberty to take that office, or to continue to exercise it, if, by any restrictions imposed upon it, it is prevented from carrying these laws into effect. As in the State, so in the church, government is an ordinance of God ; and as it is imperative upon rulers in the State to be “a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well,” so also is it imperative upon the rulers of the church to banish strange doctrines, to uphold God’s ordinances, to reprove, and rebuke, and, finally, to put away evil-doers. The spirit in which this is to be done is also prescribed. It is to be done in the spirit of meekness, and with long-suffering ; but the work must be done upon the responsibility of the Pastors to Him who has commissioned them for this purpose ; and they have a right to require from the people, that in this office and ministry they should not only not be obstructed, but affectionately and zealously aided, as ministering in these duties sometimes painful, not for themselves, but for the good of the whole. With respect to the members of a church, the same remark is applicable as to the members of a State. It is not matter of option with them whether they will be under government according to the laws of Christ or not, for that is imperative ; government in both cases being of divine appointment. They have, on the other hand, the right to full security, that they shall be governed by the laws of Christ ; and they have a right, too, to establish as many guards against human infirmity and passion in those who are “set over them,” as may be prudently devised, provided these are not carried to such an extent as to be obstructive to the legitimate scriptural discharge of their duties. The true view of the case appears to be, that the government of the church is in its Pastors, open to various modifications as to form ; and that it is to be conducted with such a concurrence of the people, as shall constitute a sufficient

guard against abuse, and yet not prevent the legitimate and efficient exercise of pastoral duties, as these duties are stated in the Scriptures. This original authority in the Pastors, and concurrent consent in the people, may be thus applied to particular cases :—

1. As to the ordination of Ministers. If we consult the New Testament, this office was never conveyed by the people. The Apostles were ordained by our Lord ; the Evangelists, by the Apostles ; the Elders in every church, both by Apostles and Evangelists. The passage which has been chiefly urged by those who would originate the ministry from the people, is Acts xiv. 23, where the historian, speaking of St. Paul and Barnabas, says, “ And when they had ordained (χειροτονησαντες) Elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord.” Here, because χειροτονεῖν originally signified to choose by way of suffrage, some have urged that these Elders were appointed by the suffrages of the people. Long, however, before the time of St. Luke, this word was used for simple designation, without any reference to election by suffrages ; and so it is employed by St. Luke himself in the same book, (Acts x. 41,) “ witnesses fore-appointed of God,” where, of course, the suffrages of men are out of the question. It is also fatal to the argument drawn from the text, that the act implied in the word, whatever it might be, was not the act of the people, but that of Paul and Barnabas. Even the Deacons, whose appointment is mentioned Acts vi., although “looked out” by the disciples as men of honest report, did not enter upon their office till solemnly appointed thereto by the Apostles. Nothing is clearer in the New Testament, than that all the candidates for the ministry were judged of by those who had been placed in that office themselves, and received their appointment from them. Such, too, was the practice of the primitive churches after the death of both Apostles and Evangelists. Presbyters, who during the life of the Apostles had the power of ordination, (for they laid their hands upon Timothy,) continued to perform that office in discharge of one solemn part of their duty, to perpetuate the ministry, and to provide for the wants of the churches. In



the times of the Apostles, who were endued with special gifts, the concurrence of the people was not, perhaps, always formally taken ; but the directions to Timothy and Titus imply a reference to the judgment of the members of the church, because from them only it could be learned whether the party fixed upon for ordination possessed those qualifications without which ordination was prohibited. When the churches assumed a more regular form, " the people were always present at ordinations, and ratified the action with their approbation and consent. To this end the Bishop was wont before every ordination to publish the names of those who were to have holy orders conferred upon them, that so the people, who best knew their lives and conversation, might interpose if they had any thing material to object against them."\* Sometimes also they nominated them by suffrages, and thus proposed them for ordination. The mode, in which the people shall be made a concurrent party, is matter of prudential regulation ; but they had an early, and certainly a reasonable, right to a voice in the appointment of their Ministers, although the power of ordination was vested in Ministers alone, to be exercised on their responsibility to Christ.

2. As to the laws by which the church is to be governed ; so far as they are manifestly laid down in the word of God, and not regulations judged to be subsidiary thereto, it is plain that the rulers of a church are bound to execute them, and the people to obey them. They cannot be matter of compact on either side, except as the subject of a mutual and solemn engagement to defer to them without any modification or appeal to any other standard.

Every church declares in some way, how it understands the doctrine and the disciplinary laws of Christ. This declaration as to doctrine, in modern times, is made by confessions or articles of faith, in which, if fundamental error is found, the evil rests upon the head of that church collectively, and upon the members individually, every one of whom is bound to try all doctrines by the holy Scriptures, and cannot support an acknowledged system of error without guilt. As to discipline,

\* Cave's Primitive Christianity.

the manner in which a church provides for public worship, the publication of the Gospel, the administration of the sacraments, the instruction of the ignorant, the succour of the distressed, the admonition of the disorderly, and the excision of offenders, (which are all points on which the New Testament has issued express injunctions,) is its declaration of the manner in which it interprets those injunctions, which also it does on its own collective responsibility, and that of its members. If, however, we take for illustration of the subject before us, a church, at least substantially right in this its interpretation of doctrine, and of the laws of Christ as to general and, what we may call for distinction's sake, "moral" discipline; these are the first principles upon which this church is founded. It is either an apostolic church, which has retained primitive faith and discipline; or it has subsequently been collected into a new communion, on account of the fall of other churches; and has placed itself, according to its own conviction, upon the basis of primitive doctrine and discipline as found in the Scriptures. On this ground either the Pastors and people met and united at first; or the people, converted to faith and holiness by the labours of one or more Pastors, holding, as they believed, these scriptural views, placed themselves under the guidance of these Pastors, and thus formed themselves into a church-state, which was their act of accession to these principles. It is clear, therefore, that by this very act, they bind themselves to comply with the original terms of the communion into which they have entered, and that they have as to these doctrines, and as to these disciplinary laws of Christ, which are to be preached and enforced, no rights of control over Ministers, which shall prevent the just exercise of their office in these respects. They have a right to such regulations and checks as shall secure, in the best possible way, the just and faithful exercise of that office, and the honest and impartial use of that power; but this is the limit of their right; and every system of suffrages, or popular concurrence, which, under pretence of guarding against abuse of ministerial authority, makes its exercise absolutely and in all cases dependent upon the consent of those over whom it extends,

goes beyond that limit, and invades the right of pastoral government, which the New Testament has established. It brings, in a word, the laws of Christ into debate, which yet the members profess to have received as their rule; and it claims to put into commission those duties which Pastors are charged by Christ personally to exercise. The Apostle Paul, had the incestuous person at Corinth denied the crime, and there had been any doubtfulness as to the fact, would unquestionably have taken the opinion of the Elders of that church and others upon that fact: But when it became a question whether the laws of Christ's discipline should be exercised or not, he did not feel himself concluded by the sense of the whole Corinthian church, which was in favour of the offender continuing in communion with them; but he instantly reproved them for their laxity, and issued the sentence of excision, thereby showing that an obvious law of Christ was not to be subjected to the decision of a majority.

This view, indeed, supposes that such a society, like almost all the churches ever known, has admitted, in the first instance, that the power of admission into the church, of reproof, of exhortation, and of excision from it, subject to various guards against abuses, is in the Pastors of a church. There are some who have adopted a different opinion, supposing that the power of administering the discipline of Christ must be conveyed by them to their Ministers, and is to be wholly controlled by their suffrages: So that there is, in these systems, not a provision of counsel against possible errors in the exercise of authority; not a guard against human infirmity or viciousness; not a reservation of right to determine upon the fitness of the cases to which the laws of Christ are applied; but a claim of co-administration as to these laws themselves, or rather an entire administration of them through the Pastor, as a passive agent of their will. Those who adopt these views are bound to show that this is the state of things established in the New Testament. That it is not, appears plain from the very term "Pastors," which imports both care and government; mild and affectionate government, indeed, but still government. Hence the office of Shepherd is applied to

describe the government of God, and the government of Kings. It appears, too, from other titles given, not merely to Apostles, but to the Presbyters they ordained and placed over the churches. They are called *ηγουμενοι*, "rulers;" *επισκοποι*, "overseers;" *προεστωτες*, "those who preside." They are commended for "ruling well;" and they are directed "to charge," "to reprove," "to rebuke," "to watch," "to silence," "to put away." The very "account" they must give to God, in connexion with the discharge of these duties, shows that their office and responsibility was peculiar and personal, and much greater than that of any private member of the church, which it could not be if they were the passive agents only in matters of doctrine and discipline of the will of the whole. To the double duty of feeding and exercising the oversight of the flock, a special reward is also promised when the "Chief Shepherd shall appear,"—a title of Christ, which shows that as the pastoral office of feeding and ruling is exercised by Christ supremely, so it is exercised by his Ministers in both branches subordinately. Finally: The exhortation to Christians to "obey them that have the rule over them," and to "submit" to them, and "to esteem them very highly for their work's sake," and to "remember them,"—all show that the ministerial office is not one of mere agency, under the absolute direction of the votes of the collected church.

3. With respect to other disciplinary regulations, supposed by any religious society to be subsidiary to the great and scriptural ends of church communion, these appear to be matters of mutual agreement, and are capable of modification by the mutual consent of Ministers and people, under their common responsibility to Christ, that they are done advisedly, with prayer, with reference to the edification of the church, and so as not to infringe upon, but to promote, the influence of the doctrines, duties, and spirit of the Gospel. The consent of the people to all such regulations, either tacitly by their adoption of them, or more expressly through any regular meetings of different officers, who may be regarded as acquainted with, and representing, the sentiments of the

whole ; as also by the approval of those aged, wise, and, from different causes, influential persons, who are to be found in all societies, and who are always, whether in office or not, their natural guardians, guides, and representatives, is necessary to confidence and harmony, and a proper security for good and orderly government. It is thus that those to whom the government or well-ordering of the church is committed, and those upon whom their influence and scriptural authority exert themselves, appear to be best brought into a state of harmony and mutual confidence ; and that abundant security is afforded against all misrule, seeing that in a voluntary communion, and where perfect liberty exists for any member to unite himself to other churches, or for any number of them to arrange themselves into a new community, subject, however, to the moral cautions of the New Testament against the schismatic spirit, it can never be the interest of those with whom the regulation of the affairs of a church is lodged, voluntarily to adopt measures which can be generally felt to be onerous and injurious, nor is it practicable to persevere in them. In this method of bringing in the concurrence of the people, all assemblages of whole societies, or very large portions of them, are avoided ;—a popular form of church government, which, however it were modified so as best to accord with the scriptural authority of Ministers, could only be tolerable in very small isolated societies, and that in the times of their greatest simplicity and love. To raise into legislators and censors all the members of a church, the young, the ignorant, and the inexperienced, is to do them great injury. It is the sure way to foster debates, contentions, and self-confidence, to open the door to intrigue and policy, to tempt forward and conceited men to become a kind of religious demagogues, and entirely to destroy the salutary influence of the aged, experienced, and gifted members, by referring every decision to numbers and suffrages, and placing all that is good and venerable and influential among the members themselves, at the feet of a democracy.

4. As to the power of admission into the church, that is clearly with Ministers, to whom the office of baptism is com-

mitted, by which the door is opened into the church universal ; and as there can be no visible communion kept up with the universal church, except by communion with some particular church, the admission into that particular communion must be in the hands of Ministers, because it is one of the duties of their office, made such by the Scripture itself, to enjoin this mode of confessing Christ, by assembling with his saints in worship, by submitting to discipline, and by “showing forth his death” at the Lord’s supper. We have, however, already said, that the members of a church, although they have no right to obstruct the just exercise of this power, have the right to prevent its being unworthily exercised ; and their concurrence with the admission, tacit or declared, according to their usages, is an arrangement, supported by analogies drawn from the New Testament, and from primitive antiquity. The expulsion of unworthy members, after admonition, devolves upon those to whom the administration of the sacraments, the signs of communion, is entrusted, and therefore upon Ministers, for this reason, that as shepherds of the flock under the chief Shepherd, they are charged to carry his laws into effect. These laws it is neither with them nor with the people to modify ; they are already declared by superior authority ; but the determination of the facts of the case to which they are to be applied, is matter of mutual investigation and decision, in order to prevent an erring or an improper exercise of authority. That such investigations should take place, not before the assembled members of a society, but before proper and select tribunals, appears not only an obviously proper, but, in many respects, a necessary regulation.

The trial of unworthy Ministers remains to be noticed, which, wherever a number of religious societies exist as one church, having therefore many Pastors, is manifestly most safely placed in the hands of those Pastors themselves ; and that not only because the official acts of censure and exclusion lie with them, but for other reasons also. It can scarcely happen that a Minister should be under accusation, except in some very particular cases, but that, from his former influence, at least with a part of the people, some faction would be found to

support him. In proportion to the ardour of this feeling, the other party would be excited to undue severity and bitterness. To try such a case before a whole society, there would not only be the same objection as in the case of private members; but the additional one, that parties would be more certainly formed, and be still more violent. If he must be arraigned then before some special tribunal, the most fitting is that of his brethren, provided that the parties accusing have the right to bring on such a trial upon exhibition of probable evidence, and to prosecute it without obstruction. In churches whose Ministers are thrown solely upon the public opinion of the society, and exist as such only by their character, this is ordinarily a sufficient guard against the toleration of improper conduct; whilst it removes the trial from those whose excitement for or against the accused might on either side be unfavourable to fair and equitable decision, and to the peace of the church.

The above remarks contain but a sketch of those principles of church government which appear to be contained in, or to be suggested by, the New Testament. They still leave much liberty to Christians to adapt them in detail to the circumstances in which they are placed. The offices to be created; the meetings necessary for the management of the various affairs of the church, spiritual and financial; the assembling of Ministers in larger or smaller numbers for counsel, and for oversight of each other, and of the churches to which they belong; are all matters of this kind, and are left to the suggestions of wisdom and piety. The extent to which distinct societies of Christians shall associate in one church under a common government, appears also to be a matter of prudence and of circumstances. In the primitive church we see different societies in a city and its neighbourhood under the common government of the assembly of Presbyters; and afterwards these grew into provincial churches, of greater or smaller extent. In modern times, we have similar associations in the form of national churches, Episcopal or Presbyterian; and of churches existing without any recognition of the State at all, and forming smaller or larger communities, from the union of a few societies, to the union of societies throughout a whole country; holding the same

doctrines, practising the same modes of worship, and placing themselves under a common code of laws and a common government. But whatever be the form they take, they are bound to respect, and to model themselves by, the principles of church communion and of church discipline which are contained in the New Testament; and they will be fruitful in holiness and usefulness, so long as they conform to them, and so long as those forms of administration are conscientiously preferred which appear best adapted to preserve and to diffuse sound doctrine, Christian practice, spirituality, and charity. That discipline is defective and bad in itself, or it is ill administered, which does not accomplish these ends; and that is best which best promotes them.

.The ends to which church authority is legitimately directed remain to be briefly considered.

The first is, the preservation and the publication of "sound doctrine." Against false doctrines, and the men "of corrupt minds" who taught them, the sermons of Christ, and the writings of the Apostles, abound in cautions; and since St. Paul lays it down as a rule, as to erring teachers, that their "mouths must be stopped," this implies, that the power of declaring what sound doctrine is, and of silencing false teachers, was confided by the Apostles to the future church. By systematic writers this has been called *potestas dogmatica*; which, abused by the ambition of man, forms no small part of that antichristian usurpation which characterizes the Church of Rome. Extravagant as are her claims, so that she brings in her traditions as of equal authority with the inspired writings, and denies to men the right of private judgment, and of trying her dogmas by the test of the holy Scriptures; there is a sober sense in which this power may be taken. The great Protestant principle, that the holy Scriptures are the only standard of doctrine; that the doctrines of every church must be proved out of them; and that to this standard every individual member has the right of bringing them, in order to the confirmation of his own faith; must be held inviolate, if we would not see divine authority displaced by human. Since, however, men may come to different conclusions upon the



meaning of Scripture, it has been the practice from primitive times to declare the sense in which Scripture is understood by collective assemblies of Ministers, and by the churches united with them, in order to the enforcement of such interpretations upon Christians generally, by the influence of learning, piety, numbers, and solemn deliberation. The reference of the question respecting circumcision by the church at Antioch to "the Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem," is the first instance of this, though with this peculiarity, that, in this case, the decision was given under plenary inspiration. Whilst one of the Apostles lived, an appeal could be made to him in like manner, when any doctrinal novelty sprung up in the church. After their death, smaller or larger Councils, composed of the public Teachers of the churches, were resorted to, that they might pronounce upon these differences of opinion, and by their authority confirm the faithful, and abash the propagators of error. Still later, four Councils, called "General," from the number of persons assembled in them from various parts of Christendom, have peculiar eminence. The Council of Nice in the fourth century, which condemned the Arian heresy, and formed that scriptural and important formulary called "the Nicene Creed;" the Council of Constantinople, held at the end of the same century, which condemned the errors of Macedonius, and asserted the divinity and personality of the Holy Ghost; and the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, about the middle of the fifth century, which censured the opinions of Nestorius and Eutyches. At Nice it was declared that the Son is truly God, of the same substance with the Father; at Constantinople, that the Holy Ghost is also truly God; at Ephesus, that the divine nature was truly united to the human in Christ in one person; at Chalcedon, that both natures remained distinct, and that the human nature was not lost or absorbed in the divine. The decisions of these Councils, both from their antiquity and from the manifest conformity of their decisions on these points to the holy Scriptures, have been received to this day in what have been called "the orthodox churches," throughout the world. On General Councils, the Romish Church has been divided as to

the questions, whether infallibility resides in them, or in the Pope, or in the Pope when at their head. Protestants cut this matter short, by acknowledging that they have erred, and may err, being composed of fallible men, and that they have no authority but as they manifestly agree with the Scriptures. To the above-mentioned Councils they have in general always paid great deference, as affording confirmation of the plain and literal sense of Scripture on the points in question ; but on no other ground. “ Things ordained by General Councils as necessary to salvation, have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared they be taken out of holy Scripture.”\* The manner in which the respective churches of the Reformation declared their doctrinal interpretation of the Scriptures on the leading points of theology, was by Confessions and Articles of Faith, and by the adoption of ancient or primitive Creeds. With reference to this practice, no doubt it is, that the Church of England declares in her twentieth Article, that “ the church hath authority in controversies of faith ;” but qualifies the tenet, by adding, “ and yet it is not lawful for the church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God’s word written ;” in which there is a manifest recognition of the right of all who have God’s word in their hands, to make use of it in order to try what any church ordains, as necessary to be believed. This authority of a church in matters of doctrine appears then to be reduced to the following particulars, which, although directly opposed to the assumptions of the Church of Rome, are of great importance : —1. To declare the sense in which it interprets the language of Scripture on all the leading doctrines of the Christian revelation ; for to contend, as some have done, that no creeds or articles of faith are proper, but that belief in the Scriptures only ought to be required, would be to destroy all doctrinal distinctions, since the most perverse interpreters of Scripture profess to believe the words of Scripture. 2. To require from all its members, with whom the right of private judgment is by all Protestant churches left inviolate, to examine such

\* Art. 21st of the Church of England.

declarations of faith, professing to convey the sense of Scripture, with modesty and proper respect to those grave and learned assemblies in which all these points have been weighed with deliberation; receiving them as guides to truth, not implicitly, it is true, but still with docility and humility. "Great weight and deference is due to such decisions; and every man that finds his own thoughts differ from them, ought to examine the matter over again with much attention and care, freeing himself all he can from prejudice and obstinacy, with a just distrust of his own understanding, and an humble respect to the judgment of his superiors. This is due to the consideration of peace and union, and to that authority which the church has to maintain it; but if, after all possible methods of inquiry, a man cannot master his thoughts, or make them agree with the public decisions, his conscience is not under bonds, since this authority is not absolute, nor grounded upon a promise of infallibility."\* 3. To silence within its own pale the preaching of all doctrines contrary to the received standards. On this every church has a right to insist which sincerely believes that contrary doctrines to its own are fundamental or dangerous errors, and which is thereby bound both to keep its members from their contamination, and also to preserve them from those distractions and controversies to which the preaching of diverse doctrines by its Ministers would inevitably lead. Nor is there any thing in the exercise of this authority contrary to Christian liberty, since the members of any communion, and especially the Ministers, know beforehand the terms of fellowship with the churches whose confessions of faith are thus made public; and because also, where conscience is unfettered by public law, they are neither prevented from enjoying their own opinions in peace, nor from propagating them in other assemblies.

The second end is, the forming of such regulations for the conduct of its Ministers, officers, and members, as shall establish a common order for worship; facilitate the manage-

\* Burnet.

ment of the affairs of the community, spiritual, economical, and financial ; and give a right direction to the general conduct of the whole society. This in technical language is called *potestas διατακτική*, and consists in making canons or rules for those particular matters which are not provided for in detail by the directions of Scripture. This power also, like the former, has been caried to a culpable excess in many churches, so as to fill them with superstition, and in many respects to introduce an onerous system of observances, like that of Judaism, the yoke from which the Gospel has set us free. The simplicity of Christianity has thus been often destroyed, and the doctrines of men set up as commandments of God. At the same time, there is a sound sense in which this power in a church must be admitted, and a deference to it bound upon the members. For, when the laws of Christ are both rightly understood and cordially admitted, the application of them to particular cases is still necessary ; many regulations also are dictated by inference and by analogies, and often appear to be required by the spirit of the Gospel, for which there is no provision in the letter of Scripture. The obligation of public worship, for instance, is plainly stated ; but the seasons of its observance, its frequency, and the mode in which it is to be conducted, must be matter of special regulation, in order that all things may be done decently and in order. The observance of the Sabbath is binding ; but particular rules guarding against such acts as, in the judgment of a church, are violations of the law of the Sabbath, are often necessary to direct the judgment and consciences of the body of the people. Baptism is to be administered ; but the manner of this service may be prescribed by a church, since the Scriptures have not determined it. So also as to the mode and the times of receiving the Lord's supper, in the same absence of inspired directions, regulations must be agreed upon, that there may be, as nearly as edification requires, an undistracted uniformity of practice. Special festivals of commemoration and thanksgivings may also be appointed, as fit occasions for the inculcation of particular truths and moral duties, and for the special excitement of grateful affections. For although they are not particularly

prescribed in Scripture, they are in manifest accordance with its spirit, and are sanctioned by many of the examples which it exhibits. Days of fasting and humiliation, for the same reasons, may be the subject of appointment; and beside the regular acts of public worship, private meetings of the members for mutual prayer, and religious converse, may also be found necessary. To these may be added, various plans for the instruction of children, the visitation and relief of the sick, and the introduction of the Gospel into neglected neighbourhoods, and its promotion in foreign lands. A considerable number of other regulations touching order, contributions, the repressing of particular vices which may mark the spirit of the times, and the practice of particular duties, will also be found necessary.

The only legitimate ends, however, of all these directions and rules are, the edification of the church, the preservation of its practical purity, the establishment of an influential order and decorum in its services, and the promotion of its usefulness to the world. The general principles by which they are to be controlled are the spirituality, simplicity, and practical character of Christianity; and the authority with which they are invested is derived from piety, wisdom, and singleness of heart in those who originate them, and from that docility and submissiveness of Christians to each other, which is enforced upon them in the New Testament. For although every Christian is exhorted to try all things, to “search the Scriptures,” and to exercise his best judgment in matters which relate to doctrine, discipline, and practice, yet he is to do this in the spirit of a Christian; not with self-willedness and self-confidence; not contemning the opinion and authority of others; not factiously and censoriously. This is his duty even where the most important subjects are in question: How much more then in things comparatively indifferent ought he to practise the apostolic rule,—“Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility.”

The third end of church government is, the infliction and removal of censures, a power (*potestas διακριτική*) the abuse

of which, and the extravagant lengths to which it has been carried, have led some wholly to deny it, or to treat it slightly ; but which is nevertheless deposited with every scriptural church. Even associations much less solemn and spiritual in their character have the power to put away their members, and to receive again, upon certain conditions, those who offend against their rules ; and if the offence which called forth this expulsion be of a moral nature, the censure of a whole society, inflicted after due examination, comes with much greater weight, and is a much greater reproach and misfortune to the person who falls under it, than that of a private individual. In the case of a Christian church, however, the proceeding connects itself with a higher than human authority. The members have separated from the world, and have placed themselves under the laws of Christ. They stand in a special relation to him, so long as they are faithful ; they are objects of his care and love, as members of his own body ; and to them, as such, great and numerous promises are made. To preserve them in this state of fidelity, to guard them from errors of doctrine and viciousness of practice, and thus to prevent their separation from Christ, the church, with its ministry, its ordinances, and its discipline, was established. He who becomes unfaithful, in opposition to the influence of those edifying and conservatory means, forfeits the favour of Christ, even before he is deservedly separated from the church ; but when he is separated, put away, denied communion with the church, he loses also the benefit of all those peculiar means of grace and salvation, and of those special influences and promises, which Christ bestows upon the church. He is not only thrown back upon common society with shame, stigmatized as an evil worker, by the solemn sentence of a religious tribunal ; but becomes, so to speak, again a member of that incorporated and hostile society, the world, against which the exclusive and penal sentences of the word of God are directed. Where the sentence of excision by a church is erring or vicious, as it may be in some cases, it cannot affect an innocent individual ; he would remain, notwithstanding the sentence of men, a member of Christ's invisible universal church ; but when it

proceeds upon a just application of the laws of Christ, there can be no doubt of its ratification in heaven, although the door is left open to penitence and restoration.

In proportion, however, as a sober and serious Christian, having those views, wishes to keep up in his own mind, and in the minds of others, a proper sense of the weight and solemnity of church-censures when rightly administered, he will feel disgusted at those assumptions of control over the mercy and justice of God, which fallible men have in some churches endeavoured to establish, and have too often exercised for the gratification of the worst passions. So because our Lord said to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," and "whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven," which is also said, Matthew xviii. 18, to all the Apostles, "it came to be understood that the sentence of excommunication, by its own intrinsic authority, condemned to eternal punishment; that the excommunicated person could not be delivered from this condemnation, unless the church gave him absolution; and that the church had the power of absolving him upon the private confession of his fault, either by prescribing to him certain acts of penance, and works of charity, the performance of which was considered as a satisfaction for the sin which he had committed, or by applying to him the merits of some other person. And as in the progress of corruption, the whole power of the church was supposed to be lodged in the Pope, there flowed from him, at his pleasure, indulgences or remissions of some parts of the penance, absolutions and pardons, the possession of which was represented to Christians as essential to salvation, and the sale of which formed a most gainful traffic."

As to the passage respecting the gift of the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter, from which these views affect to be derived, it is most naturally explained by the very apposite and obviously explanatory fact, that this Apostle was the first Preacher of the Gospel dispensation in its perfected form, both to the Jews at the day of Pentecost, and afterwards to the Gentiles. Bishop Horsley applies it only to the latter

of these events, to which indeed it may principally, but not exclusively, refer.

“ St. Peter’s custody of the keys was a temporary, not a perpetual, authority; its object was not individuals, but the whole human race. The kingdom of heaven upon earth is the true church of God. It is now, therefore, the Christian church; formerly the Jewish church was that kingdom. The true church is represented in this text, as in many passages of holy writ, under the image of a walled city, to be entered only at the gates. Under the Mosaic economy these gates were shut, and particular persons only could obtain admittance, —Israelites by birth, or by legal incorporation. The locks of these gates were the rites of the Mosaic law, which obstructed the entrance of aliens. But, after our Lord’s ascension, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, the keys of the city were given to St. Peter, by that vision which taught him, and authorized him to teach others, that all distinctions of one nation from another were at an end. By virtue of this special commission, the great Apostle applied the key, pushed back the bolt of the lock, and threw the gates of the city open for the admission of the whole Gentile world, in the instance of Cornelius and his family.”\*

When the same learned Prelate would also refer the binding and loosing power mentioned in the above texts exclusively to Peter, he forgets that in the passage above referred to, (Matt. xviii. 18,) it is given to all the Apostles: “ Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” These expressions manifestly refer to the authoritative declaration of any thing to be obligatory, and its infraction to be sinful, and therefore subject to punishment, or the contrary; and the passage receives sufficient illustration from the words of our Lord to his Apostles, after his resurrection, when, after breathing upon them, he said, “ Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.” (John xx. 22, 23.) To qualify them for this authoritative declaration of

\* Horsley’s Sermons.



what was obligatory upon men, or otherwise ; and of the terms upon which sins are remitted, and the circumstances under which they are retained ; they previously received the Holy Ghost,—a sufficient proof that this power was connected with the plenary inspiration of the Apostles ; and beyond those inspired men it could not extend, unless equally strong miraculous evidence of the same degree of inspiration were afforded by any others. The manner also in which the Apostles exercised this power elucidates the subject. We have no instance at all of their forgiving the sins of any individuals ; they merely proclaimed the terms of pardon. And we have no instance of their retaining the sins of any one, except by declaring them condemned by the laws of the Gospel, of which they were the Preachers. They authoritatively explain in their writings the terms of forgiveness ; they state as to duty what is obligatory, and what is not obligatory, upon Christians ; they pronounce sinners of various kinds, impenitent and unbelieving, to be under God's wrath ; and they declare certain apostates to be put beyond forgiveness by their own act, not by apostolic excommunication ; and thus they bind and loose, remit sins and retain them. The meaning of these passages is in this manner explained by the practice of the Apostles themselves ; and we may also see the reason why in Matthew xviii. a similar declaration stands connected with the censures of a church : “ Moreover, if thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone : If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church : But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and as a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

That here there may be a reference to a provision made among the Jews for settling questions of accusation and dispute by the Elders of their synagogues, is probable ; but it is also clear that our Lord looked forward to the establishment of his own

church, which was to displace the synagogue; and that there might be infallible rules to guide that church in its judgment on moral cases, he turns to the disciples, to whom the discourse is addressed, and says to them, "Whatsoever ye" (not the church) "shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Of the disciples then present the subsequent history leads us to conclude, that he principally meant, that the Apostles should be endued with the power, and that they were to be the inspired persons who were to furnish the church with infallible rules of judgment, in all such cases of dispute and accusation. When, therefore, any church rightly interprets these apostolic rules, and rightly applies them to particular cases, it then exercises a discipline which is not only approved, but is also confirmed, in heaven by the concurring dispensations of God, who respects his own inspirations in his Apostles. The whole shows the careful and solemn manner in which all such investigations are to be conducted, and the serious effect of them. It is by the admonishing and putting away of offenders, that the church bears its testimony against all sin before the world; and it is thus that she maintains a salutary influence over her members, by the well-grounded fear of those censures which, when scripturally administered, are sanctioned by Christ its Head; and which, when they extend to excision from the body, and no error of judgment or sinister intention vitiates the proceeding, separate the offenders from that special grace of Christ which is promised to the faithful collected into a church-state,—a loss, an evil, and a danger, which nothing but repentance, humiliation, and a return to God and his people, can repair. For it is to be observed, that this part of discipline is an ordinance of Christ, not only for the maintenance of the character of his churches, and the preservation of their influence in the world; but for the spiritual benefit of the offenders themselves. To this effect are the words of the Apostle Paul as to the immoral Corinthian, "To deliver such a one to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh," the dominion of his bodily appetites, "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." The

practice of many of the ancient churches was, in this respect, rigid; in several of the circumstances far too much so; and thus it assumed a severity much more appalling than in the apostolic times. It shows, however, how deeply the necessity of maintaining moral discipline was felt among them, and, in substance, though not in every part of the mode, is worthy of remembrance. "When disciples of Christ who had dishonoured his religion by committing any gross immorality, or by relapsing into idolatry, were cut off from the church by the sentence of excommunication; they were kept, often for years, in a state of penance, however desirous to be re-admitted. They made a public confession of their faith, accompanied with the most humiliating expressions of grief. For some time they stood without the doors, while the Christians were employed in worship. Afterwards they were allowed to enter; then to stand during a part of the service; then to remain during the whole; but they were not permitted to partake of the Lord's supper, till a formal absolution was pronounced by the church. The time of the penance was sometimes shortened, when the anguish of their mind, or any occasional distress of body, threatened the danger of their dying in that condition; or when those who were then suffering persecution, or other deserving members of the church, interceded for them, and became, by this intercession, in some measure, sureties for their future good behaviour. The duration of the penance, the acts required while it continued, and the manner of the absolution, varied at different times. The matter was, from its nature, subject to much abuse: It was often taken under the cognizance of ancient Councils; and a great part of their canons were employed in regulating the exercise of discipline."\*

In concluding this chapter, it may be observed, that, however difficult it may be, in some cases, to adjust modes of church government, so that, in the view of all, the principles of the New Testament may be fully recognised, and the ends for which churches are collected may be effectually accom-

\* Hill's Lectures.

plished, this labour will always be greatly smoothed by a steady regard, on each side, to duties as well as to rights. These are equally imperative upon Ministers, upon subordinate officers, and upon the private members of every church. Charity, candour, humility, public spirit, zeal, a forgiving spirit, and the desire, the strong desire, of unity and harmony, ought to pervade all, as well as a constant remembrance of the great and solemn truth, that Christ is the Judge, as well as the Saviour, of his churches. Whilst the people are docile ; obedient to the word of exhortation ; willing to submit, “ in the Lord,” to those who preside over them and are charged to exercise Christ’s discipline ; and whilst Ministers are gentle among them, after the example of St. Paul,—a gentleness, however, which, in his case, winked at no evil, and kept back no truth, and compromised no principle, and spared no obstinate and incurable offender,—whilst they feed the flock of Christ with sound doctrine, and are intent upon their edification, watching over them “ as they that must give account,” and study, live, and labour for no other ends, than to present that part of the church committed to their care, “ perfect in Christ Jesus ;” every church will fall as it were naturally and without effort into its proper order. Pure and undefiled religion in churches, like the first poetry, creates those subordinate rules by which it is, afterwards, guarded and governed ; and the best canons of both are those which are dictated by the fresh and primitive effusions of their own inspiration.

## CHAPTER II.

### *Institutions of Christianity :—The Sacraments.*

THE number of sacraments is held by all Protestants to be but two,—baptism, and the Lord's supper ; because they find no other instituted in the New Testament, or practised in the early church. The superstition of the Church of Rome has added no fewer than five to the number,—confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction.

The word used by the Greek fathers for sacrament was *μυστήριον*. In the New Testament, this word always means, as Campbell has shown, either a secret—something unknown till revealed ; or the spiritual meaning of some emblem or type. In both these senses it is rendered *sacramentum* in the Vulgate translation, which shows that the latter word was formerly used in a large signification. As the Greek term was employed in the New Testament to express the hidden meaning of an external symbol, as in Revelation i. 20, “ the mystery of the seven stars,” it was naturally applied by early Christians to the symbolical rite of the Lord's supper ; and as some of the most sacred and retired parts of the ancient heathen worship were called “ mysteries,” from which all but the initiated were excluded, the use of the same term to designate that most sacred act of Christian worship, which was strictly confined to the approved members of the church, was probably thought peculiarly appropriate. The Latin word *sacramentum*, in its largest sense, may signify “ a sacred ceremony ;” and is the appellation, also, of the military oath of fidelity, taken by the Roman soldiers. For both these reasons, probably, the term “ sacrament” was adopted by the Latin Christians. For the first, because of the peculiar sacredness of the Lord's supper ; and for the second, because of that engagement to be faithful to the commands of Christ,

their heavenly Leader, which was implied in this ordinance, and impressed upon them by so sacred a solemnity. It was, perhaps, from the designation of this ordinance, by the term *sacramentum*, by the Christians whom Pliny examined as to their faith and modes of worship, that he thus expresses himself in his letter to the Emperor Trajan :—"From their affirmations I learned that the sum of all their offence, call it fault or error, was, that on a day fixed they used to assemble before sunrise, and sing together, in alternate responses, hymns to Christ, as a Deity; binding themselves by the solemn engagements of an oath, not to commit any manner of wickedness," &c. The term "sacrament" was also at an early period given to baptism, as well as to the supper of the Lord, and is now confined among Protestants to these two ordinances only. The distinction between sacraments, and other religious rites, is well stated by Burnet :—\*

"This difference is to be put between sacraments and other ritual actions; that whereas other rites are badges and distinctions by which Christians are known, a sacrament is more than a bare matter of form; as in the Old Testament, circumcision and propitiatory sacrifices were things of a different nature and order from all the other ritual precepts concerning their cleansings, the distinctions of days, places, and meats. These were, indeed, precepts given them of God; but they were not federal acts of renewing the covenant, or reconciling themselves to God. By circumcision they received the seal of the covenant, and were brought under the obligation of the whole law; they were made by it debtors to it; and when by their sins they had provoked God's wrath, they were reconciled to him by their sacrifices, with which atonement was made, and so their sins were forgiven them; the nature and end of those was, to be federal acts, in the offering of which the Jews kept to their part of the covenant, and in the accepting of which God maintained it on his part; so we see a plain difference between these and a mere rite, which, though commanded, yet must pass only for the badge of a profession, as the doing

\* On the Articles.

of it is an act of obedience to a divine law. Now, in the new dispensation, though our Saviour has eased us of that law of ordinances, that grievous yoke, and those beggarly elements, which were laid upon the Jews ; yet since we are still in the body subject to our senses, and to sensible things, he has appointed some federal actions to be both the visible stipulations and professions of our Christianity, and the conveyancers to us of the blessings of the Gospel."

It is this view of the two sacraments, as federal acts, which sweeps away the five superstitious additions that the temerity of the Church of Rome has dared to elevate to the same rank of sacredness and importance.

As it is usual among men to confirm covenants by visible and solemn forms, and has been so from the most ancient times, so when Almighty God was pleased to enter into covenant-engagements with men, he condescended to the same methods of affording, on his part, sensible assurances of his fidelity, and to require the same from them. Thus, circumcision was the sign and seal of the covenant with Abraham ; and when the great covenant of grace was made in the Son of God with all nations, it was agreeable to this analogy to expect that he would institute some constantly-recurring visible sign, in confirmation of his mercy to us, which should encourage our reliance upon his promises, and have the force of a perpetual renewal of the covenant between the parties. Such is manifestly the character and ends both of the institution of baptism and the Lord's supper ; but as to the five additional sacraments of the Church of Rome, "they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God,"\* and they stand in no direct connexion with any covenant-engagement entered into by him with his creatures. Confirmation rests on no scriptural authority at all. Penance, if it mean any thing more than repentance, is equally unsanctioned by Scripture ; and if it mean "repentance toward God," it is no more a sacrament than faith. Orders, or the ordination of Ministers, is an apostolic command, but has in it no greater indication

\* Article 25th of the Church of England.

of a sacramental act than any other such command,—say the excommunication of obstinate sinners from the church, which, with just as good a reason, might be elevated into a sacrament. Marriage appears to have been made by the Papists a sacrament for this curious reason, that the Apostle Paul, when speaking of the love and union of husband and wife, and taking occasion from that to allude to the love of Christ to his church, says, “This is a great mystery,” which the Vulgate version translates, *Sacramentum hoc magnum est*: Thus they confound the large and the restricted sense of the word “sacrament,” and forget that the true “mystery” spoken of by the Apostle, lies not in marriage, but in the union of Christ with his people: “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” If, however, the use of the word “mystery” in this passage by St. Paul, were sufficient to prove marriage a sacrament, then the calling of the Gentiles, as Beza observes, might be the eighth sacrament, since St. Paul terms that “a mystery,” (Eph. i. 9,) which the Vulgate, in like manner, translates by *sacramentum*. The last of their sacraments is extreme unction, of which it is enough to say, that it is no where prescribed in Scripture; and, if it were, has clearly nothing in it of a sacramental character. The passage in St. James’s Epistle to which they refer, cannot serve them at all; for the Romanists use extreme unction only when all hope of recovery is past, whereas the prayers and the anointing mentioned by St. James were resorted to in order to a miraculous cure, for life and not for death. With them, therefore, extreme unction is called “the sacrament of the dying.”

Of the nature of sacraments there are three leading views.

The first is that taken by the Church of Rome.

According to the doctrine of this Church, the sacraments contain the grace they signify, and confer grace *ex opere operato*, by the work itself, upon such as do not put an obstruction by mortal sin. “For these sensible and natural things,” it is declared, “work by the almighty power of God in the sacraments what they could not do by their own power.” Nor is any more necessary to this effect, than that the Priests



“who make and consecrate the sacraments, have an intention of doing what the Church doth, and doth intend to do.”\* According, therefore, to this doctrine, the matter of the sacrament derives from the action of the Priest, in pronouncing certain words, a divine virtue, provided it be the intention of the Priest to give to that matter such a divine virtue, and this grace is conveyed to the soul of every person who receives it. Nor is it required of the person receiving a sacrament, that he should exercise any good disposition, or possess faith; for such is conceived to be the physical virtue of a sacrament, that, except when opposed by the obstacle of a mortal sin, the act of receiving it is alone sufficient for the experience of its efficacy. This is so capital an article of faith with the Romish Church, that the Council of Trent anathematizes all who deny that grace is conferred by the sacraments from the act itself of receiving them, and affirm that faith only in the divine promises is sufficient to the obtaining of grace: *Si quis dixerit, per ipsa novæ legis sacramenta, ex opere operato, non conferri gratiam, sed solum fidem divinæ promissionis ad gratiam consequendam sufficere, anathema sit.*† It is on this ground also, that the members of that Church argue the superiority of the sacraments of the New Testament to those of the Old; the latter having been effectual only *ex opere operantis*, from the piety and faith of the persons receiving them, whilst the former confer grace *ex opere operato*, from their own intrinsic virtue, and an immediate physical influence upon the mind of the receiver.

The first great objection to this statement is, that it has even no pretence of authority from Scripture, and grounds itself wholly upon the alleged traditions of the Church of Rome, which, in fact, are just what successive inventors of superstitious practices have thought proper to make them. The second is, that it is decidedly antiscritptural; for as the only true notion of a sacrament is, that it is the sign and seal of a covenant, and as the saving benefits of the covenant of grace are made expressly to depend upon a true faith; the condition

\* *Conc. Trid., Can. 11.*

† *Conc. Trid., Sess. vii. Can., 8.*

of grace being made by the Church of Rome the act of receiving a sacrament independent of true faith, she impudently rejects the great condition of salvation as laid down in God's word, and sets up in its place another of an opposite kind by mere human authority. The third is, that it debases an ordinance of God from a rational service into a mere charm, disconnected with every mental exercise, and working its effect physically, and not morally. The fourth is its licentious tendency; for as a very large class of sins is by the Romish Church allowed to be venial, and nothing but a mortal sin can prevent the recipient of the sacrament from receiving the grace of God; men may live in the practice of all these venial offences, and consequently in an unrenewed habit of soul, and yet be assured of the divine favour and of eternal salvation; thus again boldly contradicting the whole tenor of the New Testament. Finally: Whatever privileges the sacraments are designed to confer, all of them are made by this doctrine to depend, not upon the state of the receiver's mind, but upon the intention of the administrator, who, if not intending to impart the physical virtue to the elements, renders the sacrament of no avail to the recipient, although he performs all the external acts of the ceremony.

The opposite opinion to this gross and unholy doctrine is that maintained by Socinus, and adopted generally by his followers; to which also the notions of some orthodox Protestants have too carelessly leaned. The view taken on the subject of the sacraments by such persons is, that they differ not essentially from other rites and ceremonies of religion; but that their peculiarity consists in their emblematic character, under which they represent what is spiritual and invisible, and are memorials of past events. Their sole use, therefore, is to cherish pious sentiments, by leading the mind to such meditations as are adapted to excite them. Some also add, that they are the badges of a Christian profession, and the instituted means by which Christians testify their faith in Christ.

The fault of the Popish opinion is superstitious excess; the fault of the latter scheme is that of defect. The sacraments are emblematical; they are adapted to excite pious sentiments;

they are memorials, at least the Lord's supper bears this character; they are badges of profession; they are the appointed means for declaring our faith in Christ; and so far is this view superior to the Popish doctrine, that it elevates the sacraments from the base and degrading character of a charm and incantation, to that of a spiritual and reasonable service, and instead of making them substitutes for faith and good works, renders them subservient to both.

But if the sacraments are federal rites, that is, if they are covenant transactions, they must have a more extensive and a deeper import than this view of the subject conveys. If circumcision was a token and a seal of the covenant by which God engaged to justify men by faith, then, as we shall subsequently show, since Christian baptism came in its place, it has precisely the same office; if the passover was a sign, a pledge, or seal, and subsequently a memorial, then these characters will belong to the Lord's supper; the relation of which to the New Testament or Covenant, in the blood of our Saviour, is expressly stated by himself. What is the import of the terms "sign" and "seal," will be hereafter considered; but it is enough here to suggest them, to show that the second opinion above stated loses sight of these peculiarities, and is therefore defective.

The third opinion may be stated in the words of the formularies of several Protestant churches.

The Heidelberg Catechism has the following question and reply:—

"What are the sacraments?"

"They are holy visible signs and seals ordained by God for this end, that he may more fully declare and seal by them the promise of his Gospel unto us; to wit, that not only unto all believers in general, but unto each of them in particular, he freely giveth remission of sins and life eternal, upon the account of that only sacrifice of Christ which he accomplished upon the cross."

The Church of England, in her twenty-fifth Article, thus expresses herself:—

"Sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or

tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they be sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace, and God's will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him."

The Church of Scotland, in the one hundred and sixty-second question of her Larger Catechism, asks,

"What is a sacrament?" and replies,

"A sacrament is a holy ordinance, instituted by Christ in his church to signify, seal, and exhibit, unto those within the covenant of grace, the benefits of his mediation; to strengthen and increase their faith, and all other graces; to oblige them to obedience; to testify and cherish their love and communion one with another; and to distinguish them from those that are without."

In all these descriptions of a sacrament, terms are employed of just and weighty meaning, which will subsequently require notice. Generally it may, however, here be observed, that they all assume that there is in this ordinance an express institution of God; that there is this essential difference between them and every other symbolical ceremony, that they are seals as well as signs, that is, that they afford on the part of God pledges of grace and salvation; that as a covenant has two parties, our external acts in receiving the sacraments are indications of certain states and dispositions of our mind with regard to God's covenant, without which none can have a personal participation in its benefits, and so the sacrament is useless where these are not found; that there are words of institution; and a promise also by which the sign and the thing signified are connected together.

The covenant of which they are the seals, is that called by the Heidelberg Catechism, "the promise of the Gospel;" the import of which is, that God giveth freely to every one that believeth remission of sins, with all spiritual blessings, and "life eternal, upon the account of that only sacrifice of Christ which he accomplished upon the cross."

As SIGNS, they are visible and symbolical expositions of what the Article of the Church of England, above quoted, calls

“the grace of God,” and his “will,” that is, his “good-will towards us ;” or, according to the Church of Scotland, “significations of the benefits of his mediation ;” that is, they exhibit to the senses, under appropriate emblems, the same benefits as are exhibited in another form in the doctrines and promises of the word of God, so that the eye may affect and instruct the heart, and that for the strong incitement of our faith, our desire, and our gratitude. It ought nevertheless to be remembered that they are not signs merely of the grace of God to us, but of our obligations to him ; obligations, however, still flowing from the same grace.

They are also SEALS. A seal is a confirming sign, or, according to theological language, there is in a sacrament a *signum significans*, and a *signum confirmans* ; the former of which is said *significare*, “to notify or to declare ;” the latter *obsignare*, “to set one’s seal to,” “to witness.” As, therefore, the sacraments, when considered as signs, contain a declaration of the same doctrines and promises which the written word of God exhibits, but addressed by a significant emblem to the senses ; so also as seals, or pledges, they confirm the same promises which are assured to us by God’s own truth and faithfulness in his word, (which is the main ground of all affiance in his mercy,) and by his indwelling Spirit by which we are sealed, and have in our hearts the earnest of our heavenly inheritance. This is done by an external and visible institution ; so that God has added these ordinances to the promises of his word, not only to bring his merciful purpose towards us in Christ to mind, but constantly to assure us that those who believe in him shall be and are made partakers of his grace. These ordinances are a pledge to them, that Christ and his benefits are theirs, whilst they are required at the same time, by faith, as well as by the visible sign, to signify their compliance with his covenant, which may be called “setting to their seal.” “The sacraments are God’s seals, as they are ordinances given by him for the confirmation of our faith that he would be our covenant God ; and they are our seals, or we set our seal thereunto, when we visibly profess that we give up ourselves to him to be his people, and,

in the exercise of a true faith, look to be partakers of the benefits which Christ hath purchased according to the terms of the covenant.”\*

The passage quoted from the Heidelberg Catechism has a clause which is of great importance in explaining the design of the sacraments. They are “ visible signs and seals ordained by God for this end, that he may more fully declare and seal by them the promise of his Gospel unto us, to wit, that not only unto all believers in general, but to each of them in particular, he freely giveth remission of sins and life eternal, upon the account of that only sacrifice of Christ which he accomplished upon the cross.” For it is to be remarked that the administration is to particular individuals separately, both in baptism and the Lord’s supper,—“ Take, eat,” “ Drink ye all of this ;” so that the institution of the sign and seal of the covenant, and the acceptance of this sign and seal, is a solemn transaction between God and each individual : From which it follows, that to every one to whom the sign is exhibited, a seal and pledge of the invisible grace is also given ; and every individual who draws near with a true heart and full assurance of faith does in his own person enter into God’s covenant, and to him in particular that covenant stands firm. He renews it also in every sacramental act, the repetition of which is appointed ; and being authorized by a divine and standing institution thus to put in his claim to the full grace of the covenant, he receives thereby continual assurances of the love and faithfulness of a God who changes not ; but exhibits the same signs and pledges of the same covenant of grace, to the constant acceptance of every individual believer throughout all the ages of his church, which is charged with the ministration of these sacred symbols of his mercy to mankind. This is an important and most encouraging circumstance.

\* Dr. Ridgley.

## CHAPTER III.

### *The Institutions of the Church :—Baptism.*

THE obligation of baptism rests upon the example of our Lord, who, by his disciples, baptized many that by his discourses and miracles were brought to profess faith in him as the Messiah;—upon his solemn command to his Apostles after his resurrection, “Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;” (Matt. xxviii. 19;)—and upon the practice of the Apostles themselves, who thus showed that they did not understand baptism, like our Quakers, in a mystical sense. Thus St. Peter, in his sermon upon the day of Pentecost, exhorts, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts ii. 38.)

As to this sacrament, which has occasioned endless and various controversies, three things require examination,—its nature, its subjects, and its mode.

1. ITS NATURE.—The Romanists, agreeably to their superstitious opinion as to the efficacy of sacraments, consider baptism administered by a Priest having a good intention as of itself applying the merits of Christ to the person baptized. According to them, baptism is absolutely necessary to salvation; and they therefore admit its validity when administered to a dying child by any person present, should there be no Priest at hand. From this view of its efficacy arises their distinction between sins committed before and after baptism. The hereditary corruption of our nature, and all actual sins committed before baptism, are said to be entirely removed by it; so that if the most abandoned person were to receive it for the first time in the article of death, all his sins would be

washed away. But all sins committed after baptism, and the infusion of that grace which is conveyed by the sacrament, must be expiated by penance. In this notion of regeneration, or the washing away of original sin by baptism, the Roman Church followed Augustine ; but as he was a predestinarian, he was obliged to invent a distinction between those who are regenerated, and those who are predestinated to eternal life ; so that, according to him, although all the baptized are freed from that corruption which is entailed upon mankind by Adam's lapse, and experience a renovation of mind, none continue to walk in that state but the predestinated. The Lutheran Church also places the efficacy of this sacrament in regeneration, by which faith is actually conveyed to the soul of an infant. The Church of England in her baptismal services has not departed entirely from the terms used by the Romish Church from which she separated. She speaks of those who are by nature "born in sin," being made by baptism "the children of grace," which are, however, words of equivocal import ; and she gives thanks to God "that it hath pleased him to regenerate this infant with his Holy Spirit," probably using the term "regeneration" in the same large sense as several of the ancient fathers, and not in its modern theological interpretation, which is more strict. However this be, a controversy has long existed in the English Church as to the real opinion of her founders on this point ; one part of the Clergy holding the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, and the absolute necessity of baptism unto salvation ; the other taking different views not only of the doctrine of Scripture, but also of the import of various expressions found in the Articles, Catechisms, and Offices of the Church itself. The Quakers view baptism only as spiritual, and thus reject the rite altogether, as one of the "beggarly elements" of former dispensations ; whilst the Socinians regard it as a mere mode of professing the religion of Christ. Some of them, indeed, consider it as calculated to produce a moral effect upon those who submit to it, or who witness its administration ; whilst others think it so entirely a ceremony of induction into the society of Christians from Judaism and Paganism, as to be



necessary only when such conversions take place, so that it might be wholly laid aside in Christian nations.

We have called baptism “a federal transaction;” an initiation into, and acceptance of, the covenant of grace, required of us by Christ as a visible expression and act of that faith in him which he has made a condition of that salvation. It is a point, however, of so much importance to establish the covenant character of this ordinance, and so much of the controversy as to the proper subjects of baptism depends upon it, that we may consider it somewhat at large.

That the covenant with Abraham, of which circumcision was made the sign and seal, (Gen. xvii. 7—14,) was the general covenant of grace, and not wholly, or even chiefly, a political and national covenant, may be satisfactorily established.

The first engagement in it was, that God would “greatly bless” Abraham; which promise, although it comprehended temporal blessings, referred, as we learn from St. Paul, more fully to the blessing of his justification by the imputation of his faith for righteousness, with all the spiritual advantages consequent upon the relation which was thus established between him and God, in time and eternity. The second promise in the covenant was, that he should be “the father of many nations;” which we are also taught by St. Paul to interpret more with reference to his spiritual seed, the followers of that faith whereof cometh justification, than to his natural descendants. “That the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to that which is by the law, but to that also which is by the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,”—of all believing Gentiles as well as Jews. The third stipulation in God’s covenant with the Patriarch, was the gift to Abraham and to his seed of the land of Canaan; in which the temporal promise was manifestly but the type of the higher promise of a heavenly inheritance. Hence St. Paul says, “By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:” But this faith did not respect the fulfilment of the temporal promise; for St. Paul adds, “They looked for a city which had foundations, whose builder and maker is

God." (Heb. xi. 9, 10.) The next promise was, that God would always be "a God to Abraham, and to his seed after him;" a promise which is connected with the highest spiritual blessings, such as the remission of sins, and the sanctification of our nature, as well as with a visible church-state. It is even used to express the felicitous state of the church in heaven. (Rev. xxi. 3.) The final engagement in the Abrahamic covenant was, that in Abraham's "seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed;" and this blessing, we are expressly taught by St. Paul, was nothing less than the justification of all nations, that is, of all believers in all nations, by faith in Christ: "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Heathen by faith, preached before the Gospel to Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they who are of faith, are blessed with believing Abraham," they receive the same blessing,—justification, by the same means,—faith. (Gal. iii. 8, 9.)

This covenant with Abraham, therefore, although it respected a natural seed, Isaac, from whom a numerous progeny was to spring; and an earthly inheritance provided for this issue, the land of Canaan; and a special covenant-relation with the descendants of Isaac, through the line of Jacob, to whom Jehovah was to be a God, visibly and specially, and they a visible and peculiar people; yet was, under all these temporal, earthly, and external advantages, but a higher and spiritual grace embodying itself under these circumstances, as types of a dispensation of salvation and eternal life, to all who should follow the faith of Abraham, whose justification before God was the pattern of the justification of every man, whether Jew or Gentile, in all ages.

Now, of this covenant, in its spiritual as well as in its temporal provisions, circumcision was most certainly the sacrament, that is, the sign and the seal; for St. Paul thus explains the case: "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised." And as this rite was enjoined upon Abraham's posterity, so that every "uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his foreskin was not circumcised on the eighth day," was to

be "cut off from his people," by the special judgment of God, and that because "he had broken God's covenant," (Gen. xvii. 14,) it therefore follows that this rite was a constant publication of God's covenant of grace among the descendants of Abraham, and its repetition a continual confirmation of that covenant, on the part of God, to all practising it in that faith of which it was the ostensible expression.

As the covenant of grace made with Abraham was bound up with temporal promises and privileges, so circumcision was a sign and seal of the covenant in both its parts,—its spiritual and its temporal, its superior and inferior, provisions. The spiritual promises of the covenant continued unrestricted to all the descendants of Abraham, whether by Isaac or by Ishmael; and still lower down, to the descendants of Esau, as well as to those of Jacob. Circumcision was practised among them all by virtue of its divine institution at first; and was extended to their foreign servants, and to proselytes, as well as to their children; and wherever the sign of the covenant of grace was by appointment, there it was as a seal of that covenant, to all who believingly used it; for we read of no restriction of its spiritual blessings, that is, its saving engagements, to one line of descent from Abraham only. But over the temporal branch of the covenant, and the external religious privileges arising out of it, God exercised a rightful sovereignty, and expressly restricted them first to the line of Isaac, and then to that of Jacob, with whose descendants he entered into special covenant by the ministry of Moses. The temporal blessings and external privileges comprised under general expressions in the covenant with Abraham, were explained and enlarged under that of Moses, whilst the spiritual blessings remained unrestricted as before. This was probably the reason why circumcision was re-enacted under the law of Moses. It was a confirmation of the temporal blessings of the Abrahamic covenant, now, by a covenant of peculiarity, made over to them, whilst it was still recognised as a consuetudinary rite which had descended to them from their fathers, and as the sign and seal of the covenant of grace, made with Abraham and with all his descendants without exception. This double

reference of circumcision, both to the authority of Moses and to that of the Patriarchs, is found in the words of our Lord, John vii. 22: "Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision, not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;" or, as it is better translated by Campbell, "Moses instituted circumcision amongst you, (not that it is from Moses, but from the Patriarchs,) and ye circumcise on the Sabbath. If on the Sabbath a child receive circumcision, that the law of Moses may not be violated," &c.

From these observations, the controversy in the apostolic churches respecting circumcision will derive much elucidation.

The covenant with Abraham prescribed circumcision as an act of faith in its promises, and a pledge to perform its conditions on the part of his descendants. But the object on which this faith rested, was "the Seed of Abraham," in whom the nations of the earth were to be blessed; which Seed, says St. Paul, "is Christ;"—Christ as promised, not yet come. When the Christ had come, so as fully to enter upon his redeeming offices, he could no longer be the object of faith, as still to come; and this leading promise of the covenant being accomplished, the sign and seal of it vanished away. Nor could circumcision be continued in this view, by any, without an implied denial that Jesus was the Christ, the expected Seed of Abraham. Circumcision also as an institution of Moses, who continued it as the sign and seal of the Abrahamic covenant both in its spiritual and temporal provisions, but with respect to the latter made it also the sign and seal of the restriction of its temporal blessings and peculiar religious privileges to the descendants of Israel, was terminated by the entrance of our Lord upon his office of Mediator, in which office all nations were to be blessed in him. The Mosaic edition of the covenant not only guaranteed the land of Canaan, but the peculiarity of the Israelites, as the people and visible church of God, to the exclusion of others, except by proselytism. But when our Lord commanded the Gospel to be preached to "all nations," and opened the gates of the "common salvation" to all, whether Gentiles or Jews, circumcision, as the sign of a covenant of peculiarity and religious distinction, was done

away also. It had not only no reason remaining, but the continuance of the rite involved the recognition of exclusive privileges which had been terminated by Christ.

This will explain the views of the Apostle Paul on this great question. He declares that in Christ there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision; that neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but "faith that worketh by love;" faith in the Seed of Abraham already come and already engaged in his mediatorial and redeeming work; faith, by virtue of which the Gentiles came into the church of Christ on the same terms as the Jews themselves, and were justified and saved. The doctrine of the non-necessity of circumcision, he applies to the Jews as well as to the Gentiles, although he specially resists the attempts of the Judaizers to impose this rite upon the Gentile converts; in which he was supported by the decision of the Holy Spirit when the appeal upon this question was made to "the Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem," from the church at Antioch. At the same time it is clear that he takes two different views of the practice of circumcision, as it was continued among many of the first Christians. The first is that strong one which is expressed in Gal. v. 2—4: "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." The second is that milder view which he himself must have had when he circumcised Timothy to render him more acceptable to the Jews; and which also appears to have led him to abstain from all allusion to this practice when writing his epistle to the believing Hebrews, although many, perhaps most, of them continued to circumcise their children, as did the Jewish Christians for a long time afterwards. These different views of circumcision, held by the same person, may be explained by considering the different principles on which circumcision might be practised after it had become an obsolete ordinance.

1. It might be taken in the simple view of its first institu-

tion, as the sign and seal of the Abrahamic covenant; and then it was to be condemned as involving a denial that Abraham's Seed, the Christ, had already come, since, upon his coming, every old covenant gave place to the new covenant introduced by him.

2. It might be practised and enjoined as the sign and seal of the Mosaic covenant, which was still the Abrahamic covenant with its spiritual blessings, but with restriction of its temporal promises and special ecclesiastical privileges to the line of Jacob, with a law of observances which was obligatory upon all entering that covenant by circumcision. In that case it involved, in like manner, the notion of the continuance of an old covenant, after the establishment of the new; for thus St. Paul states the case in Gal. iii. 19: "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgression, till the Seed should come." After that therefore it had no effect: It had waxed old, and had vanished away.

3. Again: Circumcision might imply an obligation to observe all the ceremonial usages and the moral precepts of the Mosaic law, along with a general belief in the mission of Christ, as necessary to justification before God. This appears to have been the view of those among the Galatian Christians who submitted to circumcision, and of the Jewish teachers who enjoined it upon them; for St. Paul in that epistle constantly joins circumcision with legal observances, and as involving an obligation to do the whole law, in order to justification: "I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law; whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace." "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ." (Gal. ii. 16.) To all persons therefore practising circumcision in this view it was obvious, that "Christ was become of none effect;" the very principle of justification by faith alone in him was renounced, even whilst his divine mission was still admitted.

4. But there are two grounds on which circumcision may be conceived to have been innocently, though not wisely, practised among the Christian Jews. The first was that of pre-

serving an ancient national distinction, on which they valued themselves: And were a converted Jew in the present day disposed to perform that rite upon his children for this purpose only, renouncing in the act all consideration of it as a sign and seal of the old covenants, or as obliging to ceremonial acts in order to justification, no one would censure him with severity. It appears clear that it was under some such view that St. Paul circumcised Timothy, whose mother was a Jewess: He did it because of "the Jews which were in those quarters," that is, because of their national prejudices; "for they knew that his father was a Greek." The second was a lingering notion, that, even in the Christian church, the Jews who believed would still retain some degree of eminence, some superior relation to God; a notion which, however unfounded, was not one that demanded direct rebuke, when it did not proudly refuse spiritual communion with the converted Gentiles, but was held by men who "rejoiced that God had granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life." These considerations may account for the silence of St. Paul on the subject of circumcision in his Epistle to the Hebrews. Some of them continued to practise that rite, but they were probably believers of the class just mentioned; for had he thought that the rite was continued among them on any principle which affected the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, he would no doubt have been equally prompt and fearless in pointing out that apostasy from Christ which was implied in it, as when he wrote to the Galatians.

Not only might circumcision be practised with views so opposite that one might be wholly innocent, although an infirmity of prejudice; the other such as would involve a rejection of the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ; but some other Jewish observances also stood in the same circumstances. St. Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians, a part of his writings from which we obtain the most information on these questions, grounds his doubts whether the members of that church were not seeking to be "justified by the law" upon their observing "days, and months, and times, and years." Had he done more than doubt, he would have expressed him-

self more positively. He saw their danger on this point; he saw that they were taking steps to this fatal result, by such an observance of these "days," &c., as had a strong leaning and dangerous approach to that dependence upon them for justification, which would destroy their faith in Christ's solely sufficient sacrifice; but his very doubting, not of the fact of their being addicted to these observances, but of the *animus* with which they regarded them, supposes it possible, however dangerous this Jewish conformity might be, that they might be observed for reasons which would still consist with their entire reliance upon the merits of Christ for salvation. Even he himself, strongly as he resisted the imposition of this conformity to Jewish customs upon the converts to Christianity as a matter of necessity, yet in practice must have conformed to many of them, when no sacrifice of principle was understood; for, in order to gain the Jews, he became as a Jew.

From these observations, which have been somewhat digressive, we return to observe that not only was the Abrahamic covenant, of which circumcision was the sign and seal, a covenant of grace, but that when this covenant in its ancient form was done away in Christ, then the old sign and seal peculiar to that form was by consequence abolished. If then baptism be not the initiatory sign and seal of the same covenant in its new and perfect form, as circumcision was of the old, this new covenant has no such initiatory rite or sacrament at all; since the Lord's supper is not initiatory, but, like the sacrifices of old, is of regular and habitual observance. Several passages of Scripture, and the very nature of the ordinance of baptism, will, however, show that baptism is to the new covenant what circumcision was to the old, and took its place by the appointment of Christ.

This may be argued from our Lord's commission to his Apostles, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.) "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.



He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark xvi. 15, 16.)

To understand the force of these words of our Lord, it must be observed, that the gate of the common salvation was only now for the first time going to be opened to the Gentile nations. He himself had declared that in his personal ministry he was not sent but to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" and he had restricted his disciples in like manner, not only from ministering to the Gentiles, but from entering any city of the Samaritans. By what means therefore were all nations now to be brought into the church of God, which from henceforth was most truly to be catholic or universal? Plainly, by baptizing them that believed the good news, and accepted the terms of the new covenant. This is apparent from the very words; and thus was baptism expressly made the initiatory rite by which believers of all nations were to be introduced into the church and covenant of grace; an office in which it manifestly took the place of circumcision, which heretofore, even from the time of Abraham, had been the only initiatory rite into the same covenant. Moses re-enacted circumcision: Our Lord not only does not re-enact it, but, on the contrary, he appoints another mode of entrance into the covenant in its new and perfected form, and that so expressly as to amount to a formal abrogation of the ancient sign, and the putting of baptism in its place. The same argument may be maintained from the words of our Lord to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." By the kingdom of God our Lord no doubt, in the highest sense, means the future state of felicity: But he uses this phrase to express the state of his church on earth, which is the gate to that celestial kingdom; and generally indeed speaks of his church on earth under this mode of expression, rather than of the heavenly state. If then he declares that no one can enter into that church but by being "born of water and of the Holy Spirit," which heavenly gift followed upon baptism when received in true faith, he clearly makes baptism the mode of initiation into his church in this passage as in the last quoted; and in both he assigns to it the same office as

circumcision in the church of the Old Testament, whether in its Patriarchal or Mosaic form.

A further proof that baptism has precisely the same federal and initiatory character as circumcision, and that it was instituted for the same ends, and in its place, is found in Colossians ii. 10—12: “And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power; in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism,” &c. Here baptism is also made the initiatory rite of the new dispensation, that by which the Colossians were joined to Christ, in whom they are said to be “complete;” and so certain is it that baptism has the same office and import now as circumcision formerly,—with this difference only, that the object of faith was then future, and now it is Christ as come,—that the Apostle expressly calls baptism “the circumcision of Christ,” the circumcision instituted by him, which phrase he puts out of the reach of frivolous criticism, by adding exegetically,—“buried with him in baptism.” For unless the Apostle here calls baptism “the circumcision of Christ,” he asserts that we “put off the body of the sins of the flesh,” that is, become new creatures by virtue of our Lord’s own personal circumcision; but if this be absurd, then the only reason for which he can call baptism “the circumcision of Christ,” or Christian circumcision, is, that it has taken the place of the Abrahamic circumcision, and fulfils the same office of introducing believing men into God’s covenant and entitling them to the enjoyment of spiritual blessings.

But let us also quote Gal. iii. 27—29: “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye are Christ’s” by thus being baptized, and by putting on Christ, “then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

The argument here is also decisive. It cannot be denied that it was by circumcision believingly submitted to, that

strangers or Heathens, as well as Jews, became the spiritual seed of Abraham, and heirs of the same spiritual and heavenly promises. But the same office in this passage is ascribed to baptism also believingly submitted to; and the conclusion is therefore inevitable. The same covenant character of each rite is here also strongly marked, as well as that the covenant is the same, although under a different mode of administration. In no other way could circumcision avail any thing under the Abrahamic covenant, than as it was that visible act by which God's covenant to justify men by faith in the promised Seed was accepted by them. It was therefore a part of a federal transaction; that outward act which he who offered a covenant-engagement so gracious required as a solemn declaration of the acceptance of the covenanted grace upon the covenanted conditions. It was thus that the Abrahamic covenant was offered to the acceptance of all who heard it, and thus that they were to declare their acceptance of it. In the same manner there is a standing offer of the same covenant of mercy wherever the Gospel is preached. The "good news" which it contains is that of a promise, an engagement, a covenant on the part of God to remit sin, and to save all that believe in Christ. To the covenant in this new form he also requires a visible and formal act of acceptance; which act, when expressive of the required faith, makes us parties to the covenant, and entitles us through the faithfulness of God to its benefits. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" or, as in the passage before us, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ; and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

We have the same view of baptism as an act of covenant acceptance, and as it relates to God's gracious engagement to justify the ungodly by faith in his Son, in the often-quoted passage in Peter iii. 20, 21: "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a

good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

When St. Peter calls baptism the "figure," *αντιτυπον*, the antitype, of the transaction by which Noah and his family were saved from perishing with the ungodly and unbelieving world, he had doubtless in mind the faith of Noah, and that under the same view as the Apostle Paul, in Heb. xi. 7: "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which" act of faith "he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith;" an expression of the same import as if he had said, "by which act of faith he was justified before God." It has been already explained in another place\* in what way Noah's preparing of the ark, and his faith in the divine promise of preservation, were indicative of his having that direct faith in the Christ to come, of which the Apostle Paul discourses in the eleventh of the Hebrews, as that which characterized all the Elders, and by which they obtained their good report in the church. His preservation and that of his family was so involved in the fulfilment of the more ancient promise, respecting the Seed of the woman, and the deliverance of man from the power of Satan, that we are warranted to conclude that his faith in the promise respecting his own deliverance from the deluge, was supported by his faith in that greater promise, which must have fallen to the ground had the whole race perished without exception. His building of the ark, and entering into it with his family, are therefore considered, by St. Paul, as the visible expression of his faith in the ancient promises of God respecting Messiah; and for this reason baptism is called by St. Peter, without an allegory at all, but in the sobriety of fact, "the antitype" of this transaction; the one exactly answering to the other, as an external expression of faith in the same objects and the same promises.

But the Apostle does not rest in this general representation. He proceeds to express, in a particular and most forcible man-

ner, the nature of Christian baptism,—“not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Now, whether we take the word *επερωτημα*, rendered in our translation “answer,” for a demand or requirement; or for the answer to a question or questions; or in the sense of stipulation; the general import of the passage is nearly the same. If the first, then the meaning of the Apostle is, that baptism is not the putting away the filth of the flesh, not a mere external ceremony; but a rite which demands or requires something of us, in order to the attainment of a good conscience. What that is, we learn from the words of our Lord; it is faith in Christ: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;” which faith is the reliance of a penitent upon the atonement of the Saviour, who thus submits with all gratitude and truth to the terms of the evangelical covenant. If we take the second sense, we must lay aside the notion of some lexicographers and commentators, who think that there is an allusion to the ancient practice of demanding of the candidates for baptism, whether they renounced their sins, and the service of Satan, with other questions of the same import; for, ancient as these questions may be, they are probably not so ancient as the time of the Apostle. We know, however, from the instance of Philip and the eunuch, that there was an explicit requirement of faith, and as explicit an answer or confession. “And Philip said, If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest; and he answered, I believe that Jesus is the Son of God.” Every administration of baptism indeed implied this demand; and baptism, if we understand St. Peter to refer to this circumstance, was such an answer to the interrogations of the administrator, as expressed a true and evangelical faith. If we take the third rendering of “stipulation,” which has less to support it critically than either of the others, still as the profession of faith was a condition of baptism, that profession had the full force of a formal stipulation, since all true faith in Christ requires an entire subjection to him as Lord, as well as Saviour.

Upon this passage, however, a somewhat clearer light may

be thrown, by understanding the word *επερωτημα* in the sense of that which “asks, requires, seeks, something beyond itself.” The verb from which it is derived signifies “to ask, or require;” but *επερωτημα* occurs no where else in the New Testament; and but once in the version of the Seventy, Dan. iv. 17, where, however, it is used so as to be fully illustrative of the meaning of St. Peter. Nebuchadnezzar was to be humbled by being driven from men to associate with the beasts of the field; and the vision in which this was represented, concludes, “This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand, *το επερωτημα*, by the word of the holy ones, to the intent that the living may know, *ινα γνωσιν οι ζωντες*, that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men.” The Chaldaic word, like the Greek, is from a verb which signifies “to ask,” “to require,” and may be equally expressed by the word *petitio*, which is the rendering of the Vulgate, or by *postulatum*. There was an end, an intent, for which the humbling of the Babylonian King was required “by the word of the holy ones,” that, by the signal punishment of the greatest earthly Monarch, “the living might know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men.” In like manner baptism has an end, an intent, “not the putting away the filth of the flesh,” but obtaining “a good conscience toward God;” and it requires, claims, this good conscience, through that faith in Christ whereof cometh remission of sins, the cleansing of the “conscience from dead works,” and those supplies of supernatural aid by which, in future, men may “live in all good conscience before God.” It is thus that we see how St. Peter preserves the correspondence between the act of Noah in preparing the ark as an act of faith by which he was justified, and the act of submitting to Christian baptism, which is also obviously an act of faith, in order to the remission of sins, or the obtaining a good conscience before God. This is further strengthened by his immediately adding, “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:” A clause which our translators, by the use of a parenthesis, connect with “baptism doth also now save us;” so that their meaning is, we are saved by baptism through the resurrection of Jesus Christ; and as he “rose again for our justification,” this sufficiently shows

the true sense of the Apostle, who, by "our being saved," clearly means our being justified by faith.

The text, however, needs no parenthesis ; and the true sense may be thus expressed : "The antitype to which water of the flood, baptism, doth now save us ; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but that which intently seeks a good conscience towards God, through faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ." But, however a particular word may be disposed of, the whole passage can only be consistently taken to teach us, that baptism is the outward sign of our entrance into God's covenant of mercy ; and that when it is an act of true faith, it becomes an instrument of salvation, like that act of faith in Noah by which, when moved with fear, he "prepared an ark to the saving of his house," and survived the destruction of an unbelieving world.

From what has been said it will then follow, that the Abrahamic covenant and the Christian covenant is the same gracious engagement on the part of God to show mercy to man, and to bestow upon him eternal life, through faith in Christ as the true sacrifice for sin, differing only in circumstances ; and that as the sign and seal of this covenant under the old dispensation was circumcision, under the new it is baptism, which has the same federal character, performs the same initiatory office, and is instituted by the same authority. For none could have authority to lay aside the appointed seal, but the Being who first instituted it, who changed the form of the covenant itself, and who has in fact abrogated the old seal by the appointment of another, even baptism, which is made obligatory upon "all nations to whom the Gospel is preached, and is" to continue to "the end of the world."

This argument is sufficiently extended to show that the Antipædobaptist writers have in vain endeavoured to prove that baptism has not been appointed in the room of circumcision ;—a point on which, indeed, they were bound to employ all their strength ; for, the substitution of baptism for circumcision being established, one of their main objections to infant baptism, as we shall just now show, is rendered wholly nugatory.

But it is not enough in stating the nature of the ordinance of Christian baptism, to consider it generally as an act by which man enters into God's covenant of grace. Under this general view several particulars are contained, which it is of great importance rightly to understand. Baptism, both as a sign and seal, presents an entire correspondence with the ancient rite of circumcision. Let it then be considered,

1. As a SIGN. Under this view, circumcision indicated, by a visible and continued rite, the placability of God towards his sinful creatures ; and held out the promise of justification, by faith alone, to every truly penitent offender. It went further, and was the sign of sanctification, or the taking away the pollution of sin, "the superfluity of naughtiness," as well as the pardon of actual offences, and thus was the visible emblem of a regenerate mind, and a renewed life. This will appear from the following passages : "For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly in the flesh ; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly ; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter ; whose praise is not of men, but of God." (Rom. ii. 28, 29.) "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." (Deut. xxx. 6.) "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem." (Jer. iv. 4.) It was the sign also of peculiar relation to God, as his people : "Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked." (Deut. x. 15, 16.)

In all these respects, baptism, as a sign of the new covenant, corresponds to circumcision. Like that, its administration is a constant exhibition of the placability of God to man ; like that, it is the initiatory rite into a covenant which promises pardon and salvation to a true faith, of which it is the outward profession ; like that, it is the symbol of regeneration, the washing away of sin, and "the renewing of the Holy Ghost ;" and like that, it is a sign of peculiar relation to God, Christians



becoming, in consequence, “a chosen generation, a peculiar people,”—his “church” on earth, as distinguished from “the world.” “For we,” says the Apostle, “are the circumcision,” we are that peculiar people and church now, which was formerly distinguished by the sign of circumcision, “who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

But as a sign, baptism is more than circumcision; because the covenant, under its new dispensation, was not only to offer pardon upon believing, deliverance from the bondage of fleshly appetites, and a peculiar spiritual relation to God, all which we find under the Old Testament; but also to bestow the Holy Spirit, in his fulness, upon all believers; and of this effusion of “the power from on high,” baptism was made the visible sign; and perhaps for this among some other obvious reasons was substituted for circumcision, because baptism by effusion, or pouring, (the New Testament mode of baptizing, as we shall afterwards show,) was a natural symbol of this heavenly gift. The baptism of John had special reference to the Holy Spirit, which was not to be administered by him, but by Christ who should come after him. This gift only honoured John’s baptism once, in the extraordinary case of our Lord; but it constantly followed upon the baptism administered by the Apostles of Christ, after his ascension, and “the sending of the promise of the Father.” Then Peter said unto them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts ii. 38.) “According to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed,” or poured out, “on us abundantly through Jesus Christ.” For this reason Christianity is called “the ministration of the Spirit;” and so far is this from being confined to the miraculous gifts often bestowed in the first age of the church, that it is made the standing and prominent test of true Christianity to “be led by the Spirit:” “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Of this great new-covenant blessing, baptism was therefore eminently the sign; and it represented the pouring out of the Spirit, the

descending of the Spirit, the falling of the Spirit upon men, by the mode in which it was administered, the pouring of water from above upon the subjects baptized.

As a seal also, or confirming sign, baptism answers to circumcision. By the institution of the latter, a pledge was constantly given by the Almighty to bestow the spiritual blessings of which the rite was the sign,—pardon and sanctification through faith in the future Seed of Abraham; peculiar relation to him as his people; and the heavenly inheritance. Of the same blessings, baptism is also the pledge, along with that higher dispensation of the Holy Spirit which it specially represents in emblem. Thus in baptism there is on the part of God a visible assurance of his faithfulness to his covenant stipulations. But it is our seal also; it is that act by which we make ourselves parties to the covenant, and thus “set to our seal, that God is true.” In this respect it binds us, as, in the other, God mercifully binds himself for the stronger assurance of our faith. We pledge ourselves to trust wholly in Christ for pardon and salvation, and to obey his laws: “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”

In that rite also we undergo a mystical death unto sin, a mystical separation from the world, which St. Paul calls being “buried with Christ in or by baptism;” and a mystical resurrection to newness of life, through Christ’s resurrection from the dead. Thus in circumcision, an obligation of faith in the promises made to Abraham, and an obligation to holiness of life, and to the observance of the divine laws, was contracted; and Moses therefore, in a passage above quoted, argues from that peculiar visible relation of the Israelites to God, produced by outward circumcision, to the duty of circumcising the heart: “The Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart.” Deut. x. 15, 16.

If then we bring all these considerations under one view, we shall find it sufficiently established that baptism is the sign and seal of the covenant of grace under its perfected dispensation;—that it is the grand initiatory act by which we enter

into this covenant, in order to claim all its spiritual blessings, and to take upon ourselves all its obligations;—that it was appointed by Jesus Christ in a manner which plainly put it in the place of circumcision;—that it is now the means by which men become Abraham's spiritual children, and heirs with him of the promise, which was the office of circumcision, until "the Seed," the Messiah, should come;—and that baptism is therefore expressly called by St. Paul "the circumcision of Christ," or "Christian circumcision," in a sense which can only import that baptism has now taken the place of the Abrahamic rite.

The only objection of any plausibility which has been urged by Antipædobaptist writers against the substitution of baptism for circumcision, is thus stated by Mr. Booth: "If baptism succeeded in the place of circumcision, how came it that both of them were in full force at the same time, that is, from the commencement of John's ministry to the death of Christ? For one thing to come in the room of another, and the latter to hold its place, is an odd kind of succession. Admitting the succession pretended, how came it that Paul circumcised Timothy, after he had been baptized?" That circumcision was practised along with baptism from John the Baptist's ministry to the death of Christ, may be very readily granted without affecting the question; for baptism could not be made the sign and seal of the perfected covenant of grace, until that covenant was both perfected, and fully explained and proposed for acceptance, which did not take place until after "the blood of the everlasting covenant" was shed, and our Lord had opened its full import to the Apostles who were to publish it "to all nations" after his resurrection. Accordingly, we find that baptism was formally made the rite of initiation into this covenant for the first time, when our Lord gave commission to his disciples to "go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,"—"he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." John's baptism was upon profession of repentance, and faith in the speedy appearance of Him who was to baptize with the Holy Ghost and fire; and our Lord's baptism by his disciples was

administered to those Jews that believed on him, as the Messias, all of whom, like the Apostles, waited for a fuller developement of his character and offices. For since the new covenant was not then fully perfected, it could not be proposed in any other way than to prepare them that believed in Christ, by its partial but increasing manifestation in the discourses of our Lord, for the full declaration both of its benefits and obligations; which declaration was not made until after his resurrection. Whatever the nature and intent of that baptism which our Lord by his disciples administered might be, (a point on which we have no information,) like that of John it looked to something yet to come, and was not certainly that baptism in the name "of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," which was afterwards instituted as the standing initiatory rite into the Christian church. As for the circumcision of Timothy, and the practice of that rite among many of the Hebrew believers, it has already been accounted for. If indeed the Baptist writers could show that the Apostles sanctioned the practice of circumcision as a seal of the old covenant, either as it was Abrahamic or Mosaic or both, then there would be some force in the argument, that one could not succeed the other, if both were continued under inspired authority. But we have the most decided testimony of the Apostle Paul against any such use of circumcision; and he makes it, when practised in that view, a total abnegation of Christ and the new covenant. It follows, then, that, when circumcision was continued by any connivance of the Apostles, (and certainly they did no more than connive at it,) it was practised upon some grounds which did not regard it as the seal of any covenant,—from national custom, or prejudice, a feeling to which the Apostle Paul himself yielded in the case of Timothy. He circumcised him, but not from any conviction of necessity, since he uniformly declared circumcision to have vanished away with that dispensation of the covenant of which it was the seal, through the bringing in of a better hope.

We may here add, that an early father, Justin Martyr, takes the same view of the substitution of circumcision by Christian baptism: "We Gentiles," Justin observes, "have

not received that circumcision according to the flesh, but that which is spiritual ;—and moreover, for indeed we were sinners, we have received this in baptism, through God's mercy, and it is enjoined on all to receive it in like manner."

II. The nature of baptism having been thus explained, we may proceed to consider its subjects.

That believers are the proper subjects of baptism, as they were of circumcision, is beyond dispute. As it would have been a monstrous perversion of circumcision, to have administered it to any person being of adult age who did not believe in the true and living God, and in the expected "Seed of Abraham," in whom all nations were to be blessed ; so is faith in Christ also an indispensable condition for baptism in all persons of mature age ; and no Minister is at liberty to take from the candidate the visible pledge of his acceptance of the terms of God's covenant, unless he has been first taught its nature, promises, and obligations, and gives sufficient evidence of the reality of his faith, and the sincerity of his profession of obedience. Hence the administration of baptism was placed by our Lord only in the hands of those who were to preach the Gospel, that is, of those who were to declare God's method of saving men through faith in Christ, and to teach them "to observe all things whatsoever Christ had commanded them." Circumcision was connected with teaching, and belief of the truth taught ; and so also is Christian baptism.

The question, however, which now requires consideration is, whether the infant children of believing parents are entitled to be made parties to the covenant of grace, by the act of their parents, and the administration of baptism ?

In favour of infant baptism the following arguments may be adduced. Some of them are more direct than others ; but the reader will judge whether, taken all together, they do not establish this practice of the church, continued to us from the earliest ages, upon the strongest basis of scriptural authority.

1. As it has been established, that baptism was put by our Lord himself and his Apostles in the room of circumcision, as an initiatory rite into the covenant of grace ; and as the infant children of believers under the Old Testament were entitled to

the covenant benefits of the latter ordinance, and the children of Christian believers are not expressly excluded from entering into the same covenant by baptism; the absence of such an explicit exclusion is sufficient proof of their title to baptism.

For if the covenant be the same in all its spiritual blessings, and an express change was made by our Lord in the sign and seal of that covenant, but no change at all in the subjects of it, no one can have a right to carry that change further than the Lawgiver himself, and to exclude the children of believers from entering his covenant by baptism, when they had always been entitled to enter into it by circumcision. This is a censurable interference with the authority of God; a presumptuous attempt to fashion the new dispensation in this respect so as to conform it to a mere human opinion of fitness and propriety. For to say that, because baptism is directed to be administered to believers when adults are spoken of, it follows that children who are not capable of personal faith are excluded from baptism, is only to argue in the same manner as if it were contended, that, because circumcision, when adults were the subjects, was only to be administered to believers, therefore infants were excluded from that ordinance, which is contrary to the fact. This argument will not certainly exclude them from baptism by way of inference; and by no act of the Maker and Mediator of the covenant are they shut out.

2. If it had been intended to exclude infants from entering into the new covenant by baptism, the absence of every prohibitory expression to this effect in the New Testament must have been misleading to all men, and especially to the Jewish believers.

Baptism was no new ordinance when our Lord instituted it, though he gave to it a particular designation. It was his practice to adapt, in several instances, what he found already established, to the uses of his religion. "A parable, for instance, was a Jewish mode of teaching.—Who taught by parables equal to Jesus Christ? And what is the most distinguished and appropriate rite of his religion, but a service grafted on a passover custom among the Jews of his day? It was not ordained by Moses, that a part of the bread they had used in

the passover should be the last thing they ate after that supper ; yet this our Lord took as he found it, and converted it into a memorial of his body. The ‘cup of blessing’ has no authority whatever from the original institution ; yet this our Lord found in use, and adopted as a memorial of his blood. Taken together, these elements form one commemoration of his death. Probability, arising to rational certainty, therefore, would lead us to infer, that whatever rite Jesus appointed as the ordinance of admission into the community of his followers, he would also adopt from some service already existing,—from some token familiar among the people of his nation.

“In fact, we know that ‘divers baptisms’ existed under the law ; and we have every reason to believe, that the admission of proselytes into the profession of Judaism was really and truly marked by a washing with water in a ritual and ceremonial manner. I have always understood that Maimonides is perfectly correct, when he says, ‘In all ages, when a Heathen (or a stranger by nation) was willing to enter into the covenant of Israel, and gather himself under the wings of the majesty of God, and take upon himself the yoke of the law,—he must be first circumcised, and secondly baptized, and thirdly bring a sacrifice ; or, if the party were a woman, then she must be first baptized, and secondly bring a sacrifice.’ He adds, ‘At this present time, when (the temple being destroyed) there is no sacrificing, a stranger must be first circumcised, and secondly baptized.’

“Dr. Gill, indeed, in his Dissertation on Jewish Proselyte Baptism, has ventured the assertion, that ‘there is no mention made of any rite or custom of admitting Jewish proselytes by baptism, in any writings or records before the time of John the Baptist, Christ, and his Apostles ; nor in any age after them, for the first three or four hundred years ; or, however, before the writing of the Talmuds.’ But the learned Doctor has not condescended to understand the evidence of this fact. It does not rest on the testimony of Jewish record solely ; it was in circulation among the Heathen, as we learn from the clear and demonstrative testimony of Epictetus, who has these words : (He is blaming those who assume the profession of

philosophy without acting up to it :) ‘Why do you call yourself a Stoic? Why do you deceive the multitude? Why do you pretend to be a Greek, when you are a Jew? a Syrian? an Egyptian? And when we see any one wavering, we are wont to say, This is not a Jew, but acts one. But when he assumes the sentiments of one who hath been baptized and circumcised, then he both really is, and is called, a Jew. Thus we, falsifying our profession, are Jews in name, but in reality something else.’

“This practice then of the Jews—proselyte baptism—was so notorious to the Heathen in Italy and in Greece, that it furnished this philosopher with an object of comparison. Now, Epictetus lived to be very old: He is placed by Dr. Lardner A.D. 109; by Le Clerc A.D. 104. He could not be less than sixty years of age when he wrote this; and he might obtain his information thirty or forty years earlier, which brings it up to the time of the Apostles. Those who could think that the Jews would institute proselyte baptism at the very moment when the Christians were practising baptism as an initiatory rite, are not to be envied for the correctness of their judgment. The rite certainly dates much earlier, probably many ages. I see no reason for disputing the assertion of Maimonides, notwithstanding Dr. Gill’s rash and fallacious language on the subject.” \*

This baptism of proselytes, as Lightfoot has fully showed, was a baptism of families, and comprehended their infant children; and the rite was a symbol of their being washed from the pollution of idolatry. Very different indeed from the Jewish baptisms, in the extent of its import and office, was Christian baptism; nevertheless, this shows that the Jews were familiar with the rite as it extended to children, in cases of conversions from idolatry; and, as far at least as the converts from Paganism to Christianity were concerned, they could not but understand Christian baptism to extend to the infant children of Gentile proselytes, unless there had been, what we no where find in the discourses of Christ and the writings of

\* Facts and Evidences on the Subject of Baptism.



the Apostles, an express exception of them. In like manner, their own practice of infant circumcision must have misled them; for if they were taught that baptism was the initiatory seal of the Christian covenant, and had taken the place of circumcision, which St. Paul had informed them was “a seal of the righteousness which is by faith,” how should they have understood that their children were no longer to be taken into covenant with God, as under their own former religion, unless they had been told that this exclusion of children from all covenant relation to God, was one of those peculiarities of the Christian dispensation in which it differed from the religion of the Patriarchs and Moses? This was surely a great change; a change which must have made great impression upon a serious and affectionate Jewish parent, who could now no longer covenant with God for his children, or place his children in a special covenant relation to the Lord of the whole earth; a change indeed so great,—a placing of the children of Christian parents in so inferior, and, so to speak, outcast a condition, in comparison of the children of believing Jews, whilst the Abrahamic covenant remained in force,—that not only, in order to prevent mistake, did it require an express enunciation, but in the nature of the thing it must have given rise to so many objections, or at least inquiries, that explanations of the reason of this peculiarity might naturally be expected to occur in the writings of the Apostles, and especially in those of St. Paul. On the contrary, the very phraseology of these inspired men, when touching the subject of the children of believers only incidentally, was calculated to confirm the ancient practice, in opposition to what we are told is the true doctrine of the Gospel upon this point. For instance: How could the Jews have understood the words of Peter at the Pentecost, but as calling both upon them and their children to be baptized? —“Repent, and be baptized; for the promise is unto you, and to your children.” For that both are included, may be proved, says a sensible writer, by considering,

“1. The resemblance between this promise, and that in Gen. xvii. 7, ‘To be a God unto thee, and unto thy seed after thee.’—The resemblance between these two lies in two things:

(1.) Each stands connected with an ordinance, by which persons were to be admitted into church-fellowship; the one by circumcision, the other by baptism. (2.) Both agree in phraseology; the one is, 'to thee and thy seed;' the other is, 'to you and your children.' Now, every one knows that the word 'seed' means 'children;' and that 'children' means 'seed;' and that they are precisely the same. From these two strongly-resembling features, namely, their connexion with a similar ordinance, and the sameness of the phraseology, I infer, that the subjects expressed in each are the very same. And as it is certain that parents and infants were intended by the one, it must be equally certain that both are intended by the other.

"2. The sense in which the speaker must have understood the sentence in question: 'The promise is to you, and to your children.'—In order to know this, we must consider who the speaker was, and from what source he received his religious knowledge. The Apostle was a Jew. He knew, that he himself had been admitted in infancy, and that it was the ordinary practice of the church to admit infants to membership. And he likewise knew, that in this they acted on the authority of that place, where God promises to Abraham 'to be a God unto him, and unto his seed.' Now, if the Apostle knew all this, in what sense could he understand the term 'children,' as distinguished from their parents? I have said that τέκνα, 'children,' and σπέρμα, 'seed,' mean the same thing. And as the Apostle well knew that the term 'seed' intended infants, though not mere infants only; and that infants were circumcised and received into the church as being the seed, what else could he understand by the term 'children,' when mentioned with their parents? Those who will have the Apostle to mean, by the term 'children,' 'adult posterity' only, have this infelicity attending them, that they understand the term differently from all other men; and they attribute to the Apostle a sense of the word, which to him must have been the most forced and infamiliar.

"3. In what sense his hearers must have understood him, when he said, 'The promise is to you, and to your children.'

“The context informs us, that many of St. Peter’s hearers, as he himself was, were Jews. They had been accustomed for many hundred years to receive infants by circumcision into the church; and this they did, as before observed, because God had promised to be a God to Abraham and to his seed. They had understood this promise to mean parents and their infant offspring, and this idea was become familiar by the practice of many centuries. What then must have been their views, when one of their own community says to them, ‘The promise is to you and your children?’ If their practice of receiving infants was founded on a promise exactly similar, as it was, how could they possibly understand him, but as meaning the same thing, since he himself used the same mode of speech? This must have been the case, unless we admit this absurdity, that they understood him in a sense to which they had never been accustomed.

“How idle a thing it is, in a Baptist, to come with a lexicon in his hand, to inform us that *τεκνα*, ‘children,’ means ‘posterity!’ Certainly it does, and so includes the youngest infants.

“But the Baptists will have it that *τεκνα*, ‘children,’ in this place, means only ‘adult posterity.’ And if so, the Jews to whom he spoke, unless they understood St. Peter in a way in which it was morally impossible they should, would infallibly have understood him wrong. Certainly, all men, when acting freely, will understand words in that way which is most familiar to them; and nothing could be more so to the Jews, than to understand such a speech as Peter’s to mean adults and infants.

“We should more certainly come at the truth, if, instead of idly criticising, we could fancy ourselves Jews, and in the habit of circumcising infants, and receiving them into the church: And then could we imagine one of our own nation and religion to address us in the very language of Peter in this text, ‘The promise is to you and to your children;’ let us ask ourselves whether we could ever suppose him to mean adult posterity only!” \*

\* Edwards On Baptism.

To this we may add that St. Paul calls the children of believers, "holy," separated to God, and standing, therefore, in a peculiar relation to him, 1 Cor. vii. 14; a mode of speech which would also have been wholly unintelligible at least to a Jew, unless by some rite of Christianity children were made sharers in its covenanted mercies.

The practice of the Jews, and the very language of the Apostles, so naturally leading, therefore, to a misunderstanding of this sacrament, if infant baptism be not a Christian rite, and that in respect of its subjects themselves; it was the more necessary that some notice of the exclusion of infants from the Christian covenant should have been given by way of guard. And as we find no intimation of this prohibitory kind, we may confidently conclude that it was never the design of Christ to restrict this ordinance to adults only.

3. Infant children are declared by Christ to be members of his church.

That they were made members of God's church in the family of Abraham, and among the Jews, cannot be denied. They were made so by circumcision, which was not that carnal and merely political rite which many Baptist writers, in contradiction to the Scriptures, make it, but was, as we have seen, the seal of a spiritual covenant, comprehending engagements to bestow the remission of sins and all its consequent blessings in this life, and, in another, the heavenly Canaan. Among these blessings was that special relation which consisted in becoming a visible and peculiar people of God, his church. This was contained in that engagement of the covenant, "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people;" a promise which, however connected with temporal advantages, was, in its highest and most emphatic sense, wholly spiritual. Circumcision was, therefore, a religious, and not a mere political, rite; because the covenant, of which it was the seal, was in its most ample sense spiritual. If, therefore, we had no direct authority from the words of Christ to declare the infant children of believers competent to become the members of his church, the two circumstances,—that the church of God, which has always been one church in all ages, and into which the Gentiles are

now introduced, formerly admitted infants to membership by circumcision,—and that the mode of initiation into it only has been changed, and not the subjects, (of which we have no intimation,) would themselves prove that baptism admits into the Christian church both believing parents and their children, as circumcision admitted both. The same church remains; for “the olive tree” is not destroyed; the natural branches only are broken off, and the Gentiles grafted in, and “partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree,” that is, of all the spiritual blessings and privileges heretofore enjoyed by the Jews, in consequence of their relation to God as his church. But among these spiritual privileges and blessings, was the right of placing their children in covenant with God; the membership of the Jews comprehended both children and adults; and the grafting in of the Gentiles, so as to partake of the same “root and fatness,” will therefore include a right to put their children also into the covenant, so that they as well as adults may become members of Christ’s church, have God to be “their God,” and be acknowledged by him, in the special sense of the terms of the covenant, to be his “people.”

But we have our Lord’s direct testimony to this point, and that in two remarkable passages, Luke ix. 47, 48: “And Jesus took a child, and set him by him, and said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me; for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.” We grant that this is an instance of teaching by parabolic action. The intention of Christ was to impress the necessity of humility and teachableness upon his disciples, and to afford a promise, to those who should receive them in his name, of that special grace which was implied in receiving himself. But then, were there not a correspondence of circumstances between the child taken by Jesus in his arms, and the disciples compared to this child, there would be no force, no propriety, in the action, and the same truth might have been as forcibly stated without any action of this kind at all. Let then these correspondences be remarked, in order to estimate the amount

of their meaning. The humility and docility of the true disciple corresponded with the same dispositions in a young child ; and the "receiving a disciple in the name" of Christ corresponds with the receiving of a child in the name of Christ, which can only mean the receiving of each with kindness on account of a religious relation between each and Christ, which religious relation can only be well interpreted of a church relation. This is further confirmed by the next point of correspondence, the identity of Christ both with the disciple and the child. "Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me ;" but such an identity of Christ with his disciples stands wholly upon their relation to him as members of his mystical body, the church. It is in this respect only that they are "one with him ;" and there can be no identity of Christ with "little children" but by virtue of the same relation, that is, as they are members of his mystical body, the church ; of which membership, baptism is now, as circumcision was then, the initiatory rite. That was the relation in which the very child he then took up in his arms stood to him, by virtue of its circumcision ; it was a member of his Old-Testament church ; but, as he is speaking of the disciples as the future Teachers of his perfected covenant, and their reception in his name under that character, he manifestly glances at the church relationship of children to him to be established by the baptism to be instituted in his perfect dispensation.

This is, however, expressed still more explicitly in Mark x. 14, 16 : "But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not ; for of such is the kingdom of God :— and he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." Here the children spoken of are "little children," of so tender an age, that our Lord "took them up in his arms." The purpose for which they were brought was not, as some of the Baptist writers would suggest, that Christ should heal them of diseases ; for though St. Mark says, "They brought young children to Christ, that he might touch them," this is explained by St. Matthew, who says, "that he should put his hands upon them, and pray ;" and even in

the statement of St. Mark, x. 16, it is not said that our Lord healed them, but "put his hands upon them, and blessed them;" which clearly enough shows that this was the purpose for which they were brought by their parents to Christ. Nor is there any evidence that it was the practice, among the Jews, for common unofficial persons to put their hands upon the heads of those for whom they prayed. The parents here appear to have been among those who believed Christ to be a Prophet, "that Prophet," or the Messiah; and on that account earnestly desired his prayers for their children, and his official blessing upon them. That official blessing—the blessing which he was authorized and empowered to bestow by virtue of his Messiahship—he was so ready, we might say so anxious, to bestow upon them, that he was much displeased with his disciples who rebuked them that brought them, and gave a command which was to be in force in all future time, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," in order to receive my official blessing; "for of such is the kingdom of God." The first evasive criticism of the Baptist writers is, that the phrase, "of such," means "of such like," that is, of adults being of a child-like disposition; a criticism which takes away all meaning from the words of our Lord. For what kind of reason was it to offer for permitting children to come to Christ to receive his blessing, that persons not children, but who were of a child-like disposition, were the subjects of the kingdom of God? The absurdity of this is its own refutation, since the reason for children being permitted to come must be found in themselves, and not in others. The second attempt to evade the argument from this passage is, to understand "the kingdom of God," or "the kingdom of heaven," as St. Matthew has it, exclusively of the heavenly state. We gladly admit, in opposition to the Calvinistic Baptists, that all children, dying before actual sin committed, are admitted into heaven through the merits of Christ; but for this very reason it follows, that infants are proper subjects to be introduced into his church on earth. The phrases, "the kingdom of God," and "the kingdom of heaven," are, however, more frequently used by our Lord to denote the church in this

present world, than in its state of glory ; and since all the children brought to Christ to receive his blessing were not likely to die in their infancy, it could not be affirmed, that “of such is the kingdom of heaven,” if that be understood to mean the state of future happiness exclusively. As children, they might all be members of the church on earth ; but not all, as children, members of the church in heaven, seeing they might live to become adult, and be cast away. Thus, therefore, if children are expressly declared to be members of Christ’s church, then are they proper subjects of baptism, which is the initiatory rite into every portion of that church which is visible.

But let this case be more particularly considered.

Take it, that by “the kingdom of God,” or “of heaven,” our Lord means the glorified state of his church : It must be granted that none can enter into heaven who are not redeemed by Christ, and who do not stand in a vital relation to him as members of his mystical body ; or otherwise we should place human and fallen beings in that heavenly state, who are unconnected with Christ as their Redeemer, and uncleansed by him as the Sanctifier of his redeemed. Now this relation must exist on earth, before it can exist in heaven ; or else we assign the work of sanctifying the fallen nature of man to a future state,—which is contrary to the Scriptures. If infants, therefore, are thus redeemed and sanctified in their nature, and are before death made “meet for the inheritance of the saints in light ;” so that in this world they are placed in the same relation to Christ as an adult believer who derives sanctifying influence from him ; they are therefore the members of his church, they partake the grace of the covenant, and are comprehended in that promise of the covenant : “I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.” In other words, they are made members of Christ’s church, and are entitled to be recognised as such by the administration of the visible sign of initiation into some visible branch of it. If it be asked, “Of what import then is baptism to children, if as infants they already stand in a favourable relation to Christ ?” the answer is, that it is of the same import as circumcision was to Abraham, which was “a seal of the righteousness of the faith



which he had yet being uncircumcised :” It confirmed all the promises of the covenant of grace to him, and made the church of God visible to men. It is of the same import as baptism to the eunuch, who had faith already, and a willingness to submit to the rite before it was administered to him. He stood at that moment in the condition, not of a candidate for introduction into the church, but of an accepted candidate ; he was virtually a member, although not formally so ; and his baptism was not merely a sign of his faith, but a confirming sign of God’s covenant relation to him as a pardoned and accepted man, and gave him a security for the continuance and increase of the grace of the covenant, as he was prepared to receive it. In like manner, in the case of all truly believing adults applying for baptism, their relation to Christ is not that of mere candidates for membership with his church, but that of accepted candidates, standing already in a vital relation to him, but about to receive the seal which was to confirm that grace and its increase in the ordinance itself, and in future time. Thus this previous relation of infants to Christ, as accepted by him, is an argument for their baptism, not against it, seeing it is by that they are visibly recognised as the formal members of his church, and have the full grace of the covenant confirmed and sealed to them, with increase of grace as they are fitted to receive it, besides the advantage of visible connexion with the church, and of that obligation which is taken upon themselves by their parents to train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

In both views, then, “of such is the kingdom of God,”—members of his church on earth, and of his church in heaven, if they die in infancy ; for the one is necessarily involved in the other. No one can be of the kingdom of God in heaven, who does not stand in a vital sanctifying relation to Christ as the Head of his mystical body, the church on earth ; and no one can be of the kingdom of God on earth, a member of his true church, and die in that relation, without entering that state of glory to which his adoption on earth makes him an heir, through Christ.

4. The argument from apostolic practice next offers it-

self. That practice was to baptize the houses of them that believed.

The impugnors of infant baptism are pleased to argue much from the absence of all express mention of the baptism of infants in the New Testament. This, however, is easily accounted for, when it is considered that if, as we have proved, baptism took the place of circumcision, the baptism of infants was so much a matter of course as to call for no remark. The argument from silence on this subject is one which least of all the Baptists ought to dwell upon, since, as we have seen, if it had been intended to exclude children from the privilege of being placed in covenant with God, which privilege they unquestionably enjoyed under the Old Testament, this extraordinary alteration, which could not but produce remark, required to be particularly noted, both to account for it to the mind of an affectionate Jewish parent, and to guard against that mistake into which we shall just now show Christians from the earliest times fell, since they administered baptism to infants. It may further be observed, that, as to the Acts of the Apostles, the events narrated there did not require the express mention of the baptism of infants, as an act separate from the baptism of adults. That which called for the administration of baptism at that period, as now, when the Gospel is preached in a heathen land, was the believing of adult persons, not the case of persons already believing, bringing their children for baptism. On the supposition that baptism was administered to the children of the parents who thus believed, at the same time as themselves, and in consequence of their believing, it may be asked how the fact could be more naturally expressed, when it was not intended to speak of infant baptism doctrinally or distinctly, than that such an one was baptized, "and all his house;" just as a similar fact would be distinctly recorded by a modern Missionary writing to a church at home practising infant baptism, and having no controversy on the subject in his eye, by saying that he baptized such a Heathen, at such a place, with all his family. For, without going into any criticism on the Greek term rendered "house," it cannot be denied that, like the old English word employed in our translation,

and also like the word "family," it must be understood to comprehend either the children only, to the exclusion of the domestics, or both.

If we take the instances of the baptism of whole houses as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, they must be understood as marking the common mode of proceeding among the first Preachers of the Gospel when the head or heads of a family believed, or as insulated and peculiar instances. If the former, which, from what may be called the matter-of-course manner in which the cases are mentioned, is most probable; then innumerable instances must have occurred of the baptizing of houses or families, just as many, in fact, as there were of the conversion of heads of families in the apostolic age. That the majority of these houses must have included infant children is therefore certain; and it follows that the Apostles practised infant baptism.

But let the cases of the baptism of houses mentioned in the New Testament be put in the most favourable light for the purpose of the Baptists; that is, let them be considered as insulated and peculiar, and not as instances of apostolic procedure in all cases where the heads of families were converted to the faith; still the Baptist is obliged to assume, that neither in the house of the Philippian jailer, nor in that of Lydia, nor in that of Stephanas, were there any infants at all; since, if there were, they were comprehended in the whole houses which were baptized upon the believing of their respective heads. This, at least, is improbable, and no intimation of this peculiarity is given in the history.

The Baptist writers, however, think that they can prove that all the persons included in these houses were adults; and that the means of showing this from the Scriptures is an instance of "the care of Providence watching over the sacred cause of adult baptism;" thus absurdly assuming that even if this point could be made out, the whole controversy is terminated, when in fact this is but an auxiliary argument of very inferior importance to those above mentioned. But let us examine their supposed proofs. "With respect to the jailer," they tell us, that "we are expressly assured, that the Apostles spoke the

word of the Lord to all that were in his house ;” which we grant must principally, although not of necessity exclusively, refer to those who were of sufficient age to understand their discourse. And “that he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house ;” from which the inference is, that none but adult hearers, and adult believers, were in this case baptized. If so, then there could be no infant children in the house ; which as the jailer appears from his activity to have been a man in the vigour of life, and not aged, is at least far from being certain. But if it be a proof in this case that there were no infant children in the jailer’s family, that it is said, he believed and all his house ; this is not the only believing family mentioned in Scripture from which infants must be excluded. For, to say nothing of the houses of Lydia and Stephanas, the nobleman at Capernaum is said to have believed “and all his house,” John iv. 53 ; so that we are led to conclude that there were no infant children in this house also, although his sick son is not said to be his only offspring, and that son is called by him “a child,” the diminutive term *παιδιον* being used. Again : Cornelius is said, Acts x. 2, to be “one that feared God, and all his house.” Infant children, therefore, must be excluded from his family also ; and also from that of Crispus, who is said to have “believed on the Lord, with all his house ;” which house appears, from what immediately follows, to have been baptized. These instances make it much more probable that the phrases “fearing God, with all his house,” and “believing, with all his house,” include young children under the believing adults, whose religious profession they would follow, and whose sentiments they would imbibe, so that they might be called a Christian family, than that so many houses or families should have been constituted only of adult persons, to the entire exclusion of children of tender years. In the case of the jailer’s house, however, the Baptist argument manifestly halts ; for it is not said, that they only to whom the word of the Lord was spoken were baptized ; nor that they only who believed and rejoiced with the jailer were baptized. The account of the baptism is given in a separate verse, and in different phrase : “And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed

their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his," all belonging to him, "straightway;" where there is no limitation of the persons who were baptized to the adults only, by any terms which designate them as persons hearing or believing.

The next instance is that of Lydia. The words of the writer of the Acts are, "Who when she was baptized, and her house." The great difficulty with the Baptists is, to make a house for Lydia without any children at all, young or old. This, however, cannot be proved from the term itself, since the same word is that commonly used in Scripture to include children residing at home with their parents: "One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity." It is, however, conjectured, first, that she had come a trading voyage, from Thyatira to Philippi, to sell purple; as if a woman of Thyatira might not be settled in business at Philippi as a seller of this article. Then, as if to mark more strikingly the hopelessness of the attempt to torture this passage to favour an opinion, "her house" is made to consist of journeymen dyers, "employed in preparing the purple she sold;" which, however, is a notion at variance with the former; for if she was on a mere trading voyage, if she had brought her purple goods from Thyatira to Philippi to sell, she most probably brought them ready dyed, and would have no need of a dying establishment. To complete the whole, these journeymen dyers, although not a word is said of their conversion, nor even of their existence, in the whole story, are raised into "the brethren," (a term which manifestly denotes the members of the Philippian church,) whom Paul and Silas are said to have seen and comforted in the house of Lydia, before they departed!

All, however, that the history states is, that "the Lord opened Lydia's heart, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul," and that she was therefore "baptized, and her house." From this house no one has the least authority to exclude children, even young children, since there is nothing in the history to warrant the above-mentioned conjectures, and the word is in Scripture used expressly to include them. All is perfectly gratuitous on the part of the Baptists; but, whilst there is nothing to sanction the manner in which

they deal with this text, there is a circumstance strongly confirmatory of the probability that the house of Lydia, according to the natural import of the word rendered "house" or "family," contained children, and that in an infantile state. This is, that in all the other instances in which adults are mentioned as having been baptized along with the head of a family, they are mentioned as "hearing," and "believing," or in some terms which amount to this. Cornelius had called together "his kinsmen and near friends;" and while Peter spake, "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word," "and he commanded them to be baptized." So the adults in the house of the jailer at Philippi were persons to whom "the word of the Lord" was spoken; and although nothing is said of the faith of any but the jailer himself,—for the words are more properly rendered "and he, believing in God, rejoiced with all his house,"—yet is the joy which appears to have been felt by the adult part of his house, as well as by himself, to be attributed to their faith. Now, as it does not appear that the Apostles, although they baptized infant children, baptized unbelieving adult servants because their masters or mistresses believed, and yet the house of Lydia were baptized along with herself, when no mention at all is made of the Lord opening the heart of these adult domestics, nor of their believing,—the fair inference is, that "the house" of Lydia means her children only, and that, being of immature years, they were baptized with their mother according to the common custom of the Jews, to baptize the children of proselyted Gentiles along with their parents; from which practice Christian baptism appears to have been taken.

The third instance is that of "the house of Stephanas," mentioned by St. Paul, 1 Cor. i. 16, as having been baptized by himself. This family also, it is argued, must have been all adults, because they are said in the same Epistle, chap. xvi. 15, to have "addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints," and further, because they were persons who took "a lead" in the affairs of the church, the Corinthians being exhorted to "submit themselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us and laboureth." To understand this passage rightly, it is,

however, necessary to observe, that Stephanas, the head of this family, had been sent by the church of Corinth to St. Paul at Ephesus along with Fortunatus and Achaicus. In the absence of the head of the family, the Apostle commends "the house," the family, of Stephanas to the regard of the Corinthian believers, and perhaps also the houses of the two other brethren who had come with him; for in several MSS. marked by Griesbach, and in some of the versions, the text reads, "Ye know the house of Stephanas and Fortunatus," and one reads also, "and of Achaicus." By "the house" or family "of Stephanas," the Apostle must mean his children, or, along with them, his near relations dwelling together in the same family; for, since they are commended for their hospitality to the saints, servants, who have no power to show hospitality, are of course excluded. But, in the absence of the head of the family, it is very improbable that the Apostle should exhort the Corinthian church to "submit," ecclesiastically, to the wife, sons, daughters, and near relations of Stephanas, and, if the reading of Griesbach's MSS. be followed, to the family of Fortunatus, and also that of Achaicus. In respect of government, therefore, they cannot be supposed "to have had a lead in the church," according to the Baptist notion, and especially as the heads of these families were absent. They were, however, the oldest Christian families in Corinth, the house of Stephanas at least being called "the first fruits of Achaia," and eminently distinguished for "addicting themselves," setting themselves on system, to the work of ministering to the saints, that is, of communicating to the poor saints; entertaining stranger Christians, which was an important branch of practical duty in the primitive church, that in every place those who professed Christ might be kept out of the society of idolaters; and receiving the Ministers of Christ. On these accounts the Apostle commends them to the special regard of the Corinthian church, and exhorts *ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς ὑποτασσῃθε τοῖς τοῖς τοῖς*, "that you range yourselves under and co-operate with them, and with every one," also, "who helpeth with us, and laboureth;" the military metaphor contained in *εταξαν* in the preceding verse being here carried forward. These families were the oldest Christians in Corinth;

and as they were foremost in every good word and work, they were not only to be commended, but the rest were to be exhorted to serve under them as leaders in these works of charity. This appears to be the obvious sense of this otherwise obscure passage. But, in this, or indeed in any other sense which can be given to it, it proves no more than that there were adult persons in the family of Stephanas, his wife, and sons, and daughters, who were distinguished for their charity and hospitality. Still it is to be remembered, that the baptism of the oldest of the children took place several years before. The house of Stephanas "was the first fruits of Achaia," in which St. Paul began to preach not later than A.D. 51, whilst this Epistle could not be written earlier at least than A.D. 57, and might be later. Six or eight years, taken from the age of the sons and daughters of Stephanas, might bring the oldest to the state of early youth; and as to the younger branches would descend to the term of infancy, properly so called. Still further: All that the Apostle affirms of the benevolence and hospitality of the family of Stephanas is perfectly consistent with a part of his children being still very young, when he wrote the Epistle. An equal commendation for hospitality and charity might be given in the present day, with perfect propriety, to many pious families, several members of which are still in a state of infancy. It was sufficient to warrant the use of such expressions as those of the Apostle, that there were in these Corinthian families a few adults, whose conduct gave a decided character to the whole house. Thus the arguments used to prove, that in these three instances of family baptism there were no young children, are evidently very unsatisfactory; and they leave us to the conclusion, which perhaps all would come to in reading the sacred history were they quite free from the bias of a theory, that "houses" or "families," as in the commonly received import of the term, must be understood to comprise children of all ages, unless some explicit note of the contrary appears, which is not the case in any of the instances in question.

5. The last argument may be drawn from the antiquity of the practice of infant baptism.



If the baptism of the infant children of believers was not practised by the Apostles and by the primitive churches, when and where did the practice commence? To this question the Baptist writers can give no answer. It is an innovation, according to them, not upon the circumstances of a sacrament, but upon its essential principle; and yet its introduction produced no struggle; was never noticed by any general or provincial Council; and excited no controversy! This itself is strong presumptive proof of its early antiquity. On the other hand, we can point out the only ancient writer who opposed infant baptism. This was Tertullian, who lived late in the second century; but his very opposition to the practice proves, that that practice was more ancient than himself; and the principles on which he impugns it, further show that it was so. He regarded this sacrament superstitiously; he appended to it the trine immersion in the name of each of the persons of the Trinity; he gives it gravely as a reason why infants should not be baptized, that Christ says, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," therefore they must stay till they are able to come, that is, till they are grown up; "and he would prohibit the unmarried, and all in a widowed state, from baptism, because of the temptations to which they may be liable." The whole of this is solved by adverting to that notion of the efficacy of this sacrament in taking away all previous sins, which then began to prevail, so that an inducement was held out for delaying baptism as long as possible, till at length, in many cases, it was postponed to the article of death, under the belief that the dying who received this sacrament were the more secure of salvation. Tertullian, accordingly, with all his zeal, allowed that infants ought to be baptized if their lives be in danger; and thus evidently shows that his opposition to the baptism of infants in ordinary, rested upon a very different principle from that of the modern Anti-pædobaptists. Amidst all his arguments against this practice, Tertullian, however, never ventures upon one which would have been most to his purpose, and which might most forcibly have been urged had not baptism been administered to infants by the Apostles and their immediate successors. That argument would have been

the novelty of the practice, which he never asserts, and which, as he lived so early, he might have proved, had he had any ground for it. On the contrary, Justin Martyr, and Irenæus, in the second century, and Origen in the beginning of the third, expressly mention infant baptism as the practice of their times, and, by the latter this is assigned to apostolic injunction. Fidus, an African Bishop, applied to Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, to know, not whether infants were to be baptized, but whether their baptism might take place before the eighth day after their birth, that being the day on which circumcision was performed by the law of Moses. This question was considered in an African Synod, held A.D. 254, at which sixty-six Bishops were present, and "it was unanimously decreed, 'that it was not necessary to defer baptism to that day; and that the grace of God, or baptism, should be given to all, and especially to infants.'" This decision was communicated in a letter, from Cyprian to Fidus.\* We trace the practice also downwards. In the fourth century, Ambrose says, that "infants who are baptized are reformed from wickedness to the primitive state of their nature;"† and at the end of that century, the famous controversy took place between Augustine and Pelagius concerning original sin, in which the uniform practice of baptizing infants from the days of the Apostles was admitted by both parties, although they assigned different reasons for it. So little indeed were Tertullian's absurdities regarded, that he appears to have been quite forgotten by this time; for Augustine says, he never heard of any Christian, catholic or sectary, who taught any other doctrine than that infants are to be baptized.‡ Infant baptism is not mentioned in the canons of any Council; nor is it insisted upon as an object of faith in any creed; and thence we infer that it was a point not controverted at any period of the ancient church, and we know that it was the practice in all established churches. Wall says, that Peter Bruis, a Frenchman, who lived about the year 1030, whose followers were called Petrobrussians, was the first Anti-pædobaptist Teacher who had a regular congrega-

\* Cyp. Ep. 59.

† Comment. in Lucam, c. 10.

‡ De Pecc. Mor., cap. 6.

tion.\* The Anabaptists of Germany took their rise in the beginning of the fifteenth century; but it does not appear that there was any congregation of Anabaptists in England till the year 1640.† That infant baptism, which can be traced up to the very first periods of the church, and has been, till within very modern times, its uncontradicted practice, should have a lower authority than apostolic usage and appointment, may be pronounced impossible. It is not like one of those trifling, though somewhat superstitious, additions, which even in very early times began to be made to the sacraments; on the contrary, it involves a principle so important as to alter the very nature of the sacrament itself. For if personal faith be an essential requisite of baptism in all cases; if baptism be a visible declaration of this, and is vicious without it; then infant baptism was an innovation of so serious a nature, that it must have attracted attention and provoked controversy, which would have led, if not to the suppression of the error, yet to a diversity of practice in the ancient churches, which in point of fact did not exist, Tertullian himself allowing infant baptism in extreme cases.

The BENEFITS of this sacrament require to be briefly exhibited.

Baptism introduces the adult believer into the covenant of grace, and the church of Christ; and is the seal, the pledge, to him, on the part of God, of the fulfilment of all its provisions, in time and in eternity; whilst, on his part, he takes upon himself the obligations of steadfast faith and obedience.

To the infant child, it is a visible reception into the same covenant and church,—a pledge of acceptance through Christ,—the bestowment of a title to all the grace of the covenant as circumstances may require, and as the mind of the child may be capable, or made capable, of receiving it; and as it may be sought in future life by prayer, when the period of reason and moral choice shall arrive. It conveys also the present blessing of Christ, of which we are assured by his taking children in his arms and blessing them; which blessing cannot be merely nominal, but must be substantial and efficacious.

\* Hist., Part. 2, c. 7.

† Bishop Tomline's Elements.

It secures, too, the gift of the Holy Spirit in those secret spiritual influences, by which the actual regeneration of those children who die in infancy is effected ; and which are a seed of life in those who are spared, to prepare them for instruction in the word of God, as they are taught it by parental care, to incline their will and affections to good, and to begin and maintain in them the war against inward and outward evil, so that they may be divinely assisted, as reason strengthens, to make their calling and election sure. In a word, it is, both as to infants and to adults, the sign and pledge of that inward grace which, although modified in its operations by the difference of their circumstances, has respect to, and flows from, a covenant-relation to each of the three Persons in whose one name they are baptized,—acceptance by the Father,—union with Christ as the head of his mystical body, the church,—and “the communion of the Holy Ghost.” To these advantages must be added the respect which God bears to the believing act of the parents, and to their solemn prayers on the occasion, in both which the child is interested ; as well as in that solemn engagement of the parents which the rite necessarily implies, to bring up their child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

To the parents it is a benefit also. It assures them that God will not only be their God, but “the God of their seed after them ;” it thus gives them, as the Israelites of old, the right to covenant with God for their “little ones ;” and it is a consoling pledge that their dying infant offspring shall be saved, since He who says, “Suffer little children to come unto me,” has added, “for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” They are reminded by it also of the necessity of acquainting themselves with God’s covenant, that they may diligently teach it to their children ; and that, as they have covenanted with God for their children, they are bound thereby to enforce the covenant-conditions upon them as they come to years,—by example, as well as by education ; by prayer, as well as by profession of the name of Christ.

III. The **MODE** of baptism remains to be considered.

Although the manner in which the element of water is

applied in baptism is but a circumstance of this sacrament, it will not be a matter of surprise to those who reflect upon the proneness of men to attach undue importance to comparative trifles, that it has produced so much controversy. The question as to the proper subjects of baptism is one which is to be respected for its importance ; that as to the mode has occupied more time, and excited greater feeling, than it is in any view entitled to. It cannot, however, be passed over ; because the advocates for immersion are often very troublesome to their fellow Christians, unsettle weak minds, and sometimes perhaps, from their zeal for a form, endanger their own spirituality. Against the doctrine, that the only legitimate mode of baptizing is by immersion, we may first observe, that there are several strong presumptions.

1. It is not probable, that if immersion were the only allowable mode of baptism, it should not have been expressly enjoined.

2. It is not probable, that, in a religion designed to be universal, a mode of administering this ordinance should be obligatory the practice of which is ill adapted to so many climates, where it would either be exceedingly harsh to immerse the candidates, male and female, strong and feeble, in water ; or, in some places, as in the higher latitudes, for a great part of the year impossible. Even if immersion were in fact the original mode of baptizing in the name of Christ, these reasons make it improbable that no accommodation of the form should take place without vitiating the ordinance. This some of the stricter Baptists assert, although they themselves depart from the primitive mode of partaking of the Lord's supper, in accommodation to the customs of their country.

3. It is still more unlikely, that in a religion of mercy there should be no consideration of health and life in the administration of an ordinance of salvation, since it is certain that in countries where cold bathing is little practised, great risk of both is often incurred, especially in the case of women and delicate persons of either sex, and fatal effects do sometimes occur.

4. It is also exceedingly improbable, that in such circum-

stances of climate, and the unfrequent use of the bath, a mode of baptizing should have been appointed, which from the shivering, the sobbing, and other bodily uneasiness produced, should distract the thoughts, and unfit the mind for a collected performance of a religious and solemn act of devotion.

5. It is highly improbable that the three thousand converts at the Pentecost, who, let it be observed, were baptized on the same day, were all baptized by immersion; or that the jailer and "all his" were baptized in the same manner in the night, although the Baptists have invented "a tank or bath in the prison at Philippi" for that purpose.

Finally: It is most of all improbable, that a religion like the Christian, so scrupulously delicate, should have enjoined the immersion of women by men, and in the presence of men. In an after-age, when immersion came into fashion, baptisteries, and rooms for women, and changes of garments, and other auxiliaries to this practice, came into use, because they were found necessary to decency; but there could be no such conveniences in the first instance; and, accordingly, we read of none. With all the arrangements of modern times, baptism by immersion is not a decent practice; there is not a female, perhaps, who submits to it, who has not a great previous struggle with her delicacy; but that, at a time when no such accommodations could be had as have since been found necessary, such a ceremony should have been constantly performing wherever the Apostles and first Preachers went, and that at pools and rivers, in the presence of many spectators, and they sometimes unbelievers and scoffers, is a thing not rationally credible.

We grant that the practice of immersion is ancient; and so are many other superstitious appendages to baptism, which were adopted under the notion of making the rite more emblematical and impressive. We not only trace immersion to the second century, but immersion three times, anointing with oil, signing with the sign of the cross, imposition of hands, exorcism, eating milk and honey, putting on of white garments, all connected with baptism, and first mentioned by Tertullian; the invention of men like himself, who, with much

genius and eloquence, had little judgment, and were superstitious to a degree worthy of the darkest ages which followed. It was this authority for immersion which led Wall, and other writers on the side of infant baptism, to surrender the point to the Anti-pædobaptists, and to conclude that immersion was the apostolic practice. Several national churches too, like our own, swayed by the same authority, are favourable to immersion, although they do not think it binding, and generally practise effusion or sprinkling.

Neither Tertullian nor Cyprian was, however, so strenuous for immersion as to deny the validity of baptism by aspersion, or effusion. In cases of sickness or weakness they only sprinkled water upon the face, which we suppose no modern Baptist would allow. Clinic baptism too, or the baptism of the sick in bed, by aspersion, is allowed by Cyprian to be valid; so that "if the persons recover, they need not be baptized by immersion."\* Gennadius of Marseilles, in the fifth century, says, that baptism was administered in the Gallic church, in his time, indifferently, by immersion or by sprinkling. In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas says, "that baptism may be given, not only by immersion, but also by effusion of water, or sprinkling with it." And Erasmus affirms,† that in his time it was the custom to sprinkle infants in Holland, and to dip them in England. Of these two modes, one only was primitive and apostolic. Which that was we shall just now consider. At present it is only necessary to observe, that immersion is not the only mode which can plead antiquity in its favour; and that, as the superstition of antiquity appears to have gone most in favour of baptism by immersion, this is a circumstance which affords a strong presumption, that it was one of those additions to the ancient rite which superstition originated. This may be made out almost to a moral certainty, without referring at all to the argument from Scripture. The "ancient Christians," the "primitive Christians," as they are called by the advocates of immersion, that is, Christians of about the age of Tertullian and Cyprian,

\* Epist. 69.

† Epist. 76.

and a little downward,—whose practice of immersion is used as an argument to prove that mode only to have had apostolic sanction,—baptized the candidates naked. Thus Wall in his *History of Baptism*: “The ancient Christians when they were baptized by immersion, were all baptized naked, whether they were men, women, or children. They thought it better represented the putting off of the old man, and also the nakedness of Christ on the cross; moreover, as baptism is a washing, they judged it should be the washing of the body, not of the clothes.” This is an instance of the manner in which they affected to improve the emblematical character of the ordinance. Robinson also, in his *History of Baptism*, states the same thing: “Let it be observed, that the primitive Christians baptized naked. There is no ancient historical fact better authenticated than this.” “They, however,” says Wall, “took great care for preserving the modesty of any woman who was to be baptized. None but women came near till her body was in the water; then the Priest came, and putting her head also under water he departed, and left her to the women.” Now, if antiquity be pleaded as a proof that immersion was the really primitive mode of baptizing, it must be pleaded in favour of the gross and offensive circumstance of baptizing naked, which was considered of as much importance as the other; and then we may safely leave it for any one to say whether he really believes that the three thousand persons mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles were baptized naked; and whether, when St. Paul baptized Lydia, she was put into the water naked by her women, and that the Apostle then hastened “to put her head under water also, using the form of baptism, and retired, leaving her to the women” to take her away to dress. Immersion, with all its appendages,—dipping three times, nakedness, unction, the eating of milk and honey, exorcism, &c.,—bears manifest marks of that disposition to improve upon God’s ordinances for which even the close of the second century was remarkable, and which laid the foundation of that general corruption which so speedily followed.

But we proceed to the New Testament itself, and deny that



a single clear case of baptism by immersion can be produced from it.

The word itself, as it has been often shown, proves nothing. The verb, with its derivatives, signifies "to dip the hand into a dish," Matthew xxvi. 23 ; "to stain a vesture with blood," Rev. xix. 13 ; "to wet the body with dew," Dan. iv. 33 ; "to paint or smear the face with colours ;" "to stain the hand by pressing a substance ;" "to be overwhelmed in the waters as a sunken ship ;" "to be drowned by falling into water ;" "to sink" in the neuter sense ; "to immerse totally ;" "to plunge up to the neck ;" "to be immersed up to the middle ;" "to be drunken with wine ;" "to be dyed, tinged, and imbued ;" "to wash by effusion of water ;" "to pour water upon the hands," or any other part of the body ; "to sprinkle." A word then of such large application affords as good proof for sprinkling, or partial dipping, or washing with water, as for immersion in it. The controversy on this accommodating word has been carried on to weariness ; and if even the advocates of immersion could prove, what they have not been able to do, that plunging is the primary meaning of the term, they would gain nothing, since, in Scripture, it is notoriously used to express other applications of water. The Jews had divers baptisms in their service ; but these washings of the body in or with water were not immersions, and in some instances they were mere sprinklings. The Pharisees baptized before they ate ; but this baptism was the washing of hands, which in eastern countries is done by servants pouring water over them, and not by dipping :—"Here is Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who poured water on the hands of Elijah," 2 Kings iii. 11 ; that is, who acted as his servant. In the same manner the feet were washed : "Thou gavest me no water upon ( $\epsilon\pi\iota$ ) my feet," Luke vii. 44. Again : The Pharisees are said to have held the washing or baptisms "of cups and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables ;" not certainly for the sake of cleanliness, (for all people hold the washing or baptism of such utensils for this purpose,) but from superstitious notions of purification. Now, as sprinkling is prescribed in the law of Moses, and was familiar to the Jews, as

the mode of purification from uncleanness, as in the case of the sprinkling of the water of separation, Num. xix. 19, it is for this reason much more probable that the baptism of these vessels was effected by sprinkling, than by either pouring or immersion. But that they were not immersed, at least not the whole of them, may be easily made to appear; and if baptism as to any of these utensils does not signify immersion, the argument from the use of the word must be abandoned. Suppose, then, the pots, cups, and brasen vessels to have been baptized by immersion; the beds, or couches used to recline upon at their meals, which they ate in an accumbent posture, couches which were constructed for three or five persons each to lie down upon, must certainly have been exempted from the operation of a baptism by dipping, which was probably practised, like the baptism of their hands, before every meal. The word is also used by the LXX., in Dan. iv. 33, where Nebuchadnezzar is said to have been wet with the dew of heaven, which was plainly effected, not by his immersion in dew, but by its descent upon him. Finally: It occurs in 1 Cor. x. 2: "And were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;" where also immersion is out of the case. The Israelites were not immersed in the sea, for they went through it "as on dry land;" and they were not immersed in the cloud, which was above them. In this case, if the spray of the sea is referred to, or the descent of rain from the cloud, they were baptized by sprinkling, or at most by pouring; and that there is an allusion to the latter circumstance, is made almost certain by a passage in the song of Deborah, and other expressions in the Psalms, which speak of "rain," and the "pouring out of water," and "droppings" from the "cloud" which directed the march of the Jews in the wilderness. Whatever, therefore, the primary meaning of the verb "to baptize" may be, is a question of no importance on one side or the other. Leaving the mode of administering baptism, as a religious rite, out of the question, it is used generally, at least in the New Testament, not to express immersion in water, but for the act of pouring or sprinkling it; and that baptism, when spoken of as a religious rite, is to be understood as

administered by immersion, no satisfactory instance can be adduced.

The baptism of John is the first instance usually adduced in proof of this practice :—The multitudes who went out to him were “baptized of him in Jordan ;” they were therefore immersed.

To say nothing here of the laborious and apparently impossible task imposed upon John, of plunging the multitudes, who flocked to him day by day, into the river ; and the indecency of the whole proceeding when women were also concerned ; it is plain that the principal object of the Evangelists, in making this statement, was to point out the place where John exercised his ministry and baptized, and not to describe the mode : If the latter is at all referred to, it must be acknowledged that this was incidental to the other design. Now it so happens, that we have a passage which relates to John’s baptism, and which can only be fairly interpreted by referring to his mode of baptizing, as the first consideration ; a passage, too, which John himself uttered at the very time he was baptizing “in Jordan :” “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance ; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I : He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” Our translators, in this passage, aware of the absurdity of translating the preposition *εν*, “in,” have properly rendered it “with ;” but the advocates of immersion do not stumble at trifles, and boldly rush into the absurdity of Campbell’s translation : “I indeed baptize you in water ; he will baptize you in the Holy Ghost and fire.” Unfortunately for this translation, we have not only the utter senselessness of the phrases, “baptized,” “plunged, in the Holy Ghost,” and “plunged in fire,” to set against it, but also the very history of the completion of this prophetic declaration ; and that not only as to the fact that Christ did indeed baptize his disciples with the Holy Ghost and with fire, but also as to the mode in which this baptism was effected : “And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.” Thus the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire was a descent upon, and not an immersion into. With this too

agree all the accounts of the baptism of the Holy Spirit : They are all from above, like the pouring out or shedding of water upon the head ; nor is there any expression in Scripture which bears the most remote resemblance to immersing, plunging, in the Holy Ghost. When our Lord received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, “the Spirit of God descended like a dove, and lighted upon him.” When Cornelius and his family received the same gift, “the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word ;” “and they of the circumcision that believed were astonished, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost,” which, as the words imply, had been in like manner “poured out on them.” The common phrase, to “receive” the Holy Ghost, is also inconsistent with the idea of being immersed, plunged into the Holy Ghost ; and, finally, when St. Paul connects the baptism with water, and the baptism with the Holy Ghost together, as in the words of John the Baptist just quoted, he expresses the mode of the baptism of the Spirit in the same manner : “According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost ; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” (Titus iii. 5, 6.) That the mode therefore in which John baptized was by pouring water upon his disciples, may be concluded from his using the same word to express the pouring out, the descent, of the Spirit upon the disciples of Jesus. For if baptism necessarily means immersion, and John baptized by immersion, then did not Jesus baptize his disciples with the Holy Ghost. He might bestow it upon them, but he did not baptize them with it, according to the immersionists, since he only poured it upon them, shed it upon them, caused it to fall upon them ; none of which, according to them, is baptism. It follows, therefore, that the prediction of John was never fulfilled, because, in their sense of baptizing, none of the disciples of Jesus mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles ever received the Holy Ghost but by effusion. This is the dilemma into which they put themselves. They must allow that baptism is not in this passage used for immersion ; or they must deny that Jesus ever did baptize with the Holy Ghost.

To baptize in Jordan, does not, then, signify to plunge in the river of Jordan. John made the neighbourhood of Jordan the principal place of his ministry. Either at the fountains of some favoured district, or at some river, baptize he must, because of the multitudes who came to his baptism, in a country deficient in springs, and of water in general ; but there are several ways of understanding the phrase "in Jordan," which give a sufficiently good sense, and involve no contradiction to the words of John himself, who makes his baptism an effusion of water to answer to the effusion of the Holy Spirit, as administered by Jesus. It may be taken as a note of place, not of mode. "In Jordan," therefore, the expression of St. Matthew is ; in St. John, "in Bethabara, beyond," or situate on, "Jordan, where John was baptizing ;" and this seems all that the expression was intended to mark, and is the sense to be preferred. It is thus equivalent to "at Jordan," "at Bethabara, situate on Jordan ;" "at" being a frequent sense of *εν*. Or it may signify that the water of Jordan was made use of by John for baptizing, however it might be applied ; for we should think it no violent mode of expression to say that we washed ourselves in a river, although we should mean, not that we plunged ourselves into it, but merely that we took up the water in our hands, and applied it in the way of effusion. Or it may be taken to express his baptizing in the bed of the river, into which he must have descended with the baptized, in order to take up the water with his hand, or with some small vessel, as represented in ancient bas-reliefs, to pour it out upon them. This would be the position of any baptizer using a river at all accessible by a shelving bank ; and when within the bed of the stream, he might as truly be said to be in the river, when mere place was the principal thing to be pointed out, as if he had been immersed in the water. The Jordan in this respect is rather remarkable, having, according to Maundrell, an outermost bank formed by its occasional swellings. The remark of this traveller is, "After having descended the outermost bank, you go a furlong upon a level strand, before you come to the immediate bank of the river." Any of these views of the import of the phrases "in Jordan," "in the river of Jordan,"

used plainly with intention to point out the place where John exercised his ministry, will sufficiently explain them, without involving us in the inextricable difficulties which embarrass the theory, that John baptized only by immersion. To go, indeed, to a river to baptize would in such countries as our own, where water for the mere purpose of effusion may readily be obtained out of cisterns, pumps, &c., very naturally suggest to the simple reader, that the reason for John's choice of a river was, that it afforded the means of immersion. But in those countries the case was different. Springs, as we have said, were scarce; and the water for domestic purposes had to be fetched daily by the women in pitchers from the nearest rivers and fountains, which rendered the domestic supply scanty, and of course valuable. But even if this reason did not exist, baptism in rivers would not, as a matter of course, imply immersion. Of this we have an instance in the customs of a people of Mesopotamia, mentioned in the *Journal of Wolfe*, the Missionary. This sect of Christians call themselves "the followers of St. John the Baptist, who was a follower of Christ." Among many other questions, Mr. Wolfe inquired of one of them respecting their mode of baptism, and was answered, "The Priests or Bishop baptize children thirty days old. They take the child to the banks of the river; a relative or friend holds the child near the surface of the water, while the Priest sprinkles the element upon the child, and with prayers they name the child."\* Mr. Wolfe asks, "Why do they baptize in rivers?" Answer. "Because St. John the Baptist baptized in the river Jordan." The same account was given afterwards by one of their Bishops or High Priests: "They carry the children after thirty days to the river; the Priest says a prayer; the godfather takes the child to the river, while the Priest sprinkles it with water." Thus we have in modern times river-baptism without immersion; and among the Syrian Christians, though immersion is used, it does not take place till after the true baptismal rite, pouring water upon the child in the name of the Trinity, has been performed.

\* *Journal*, vol. ii., p. 311.

The second proof adduced by the immersionists is taken from the baptism of our Lord, who is said, Matthew iii. 16, "to have gone up straightway out of the water." Here, however, the preposition used signifies "from," and ἀνέβη ἀπο τοῦ ὕδατος, is simply, "He went up from the water." We grant that this might have been properly said in whatever way the baptism had been previously performed; but then it certainly in itself affords no argument on which to build the notion of the immersion of our Saviour.

The great passage of the immersionists, however, is Acts viii. 38, 39: "And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water," &c. This is relied upon as a decisive proof of the immersion and emersion of the eunuch. If so, however, it proves too much; for nothing is said of the eunuch which is not said of Philip, "They went down both into the water," "and when they were come up out of the water;" and so Philip must have immersed himself as well as the eunuch. Nor will the prepositions determine the case: They would have been employed properly had Philip and the eunuch gone into the water by partial or by entire immersion, and therefore come out of it on dry land; and with equal propriety, and according to the habitual use of the same prepositions by Greek writers, they would express going to the water, without going into it, and returning from it, and not out of it; for εἰς is spoken of place, and properly signifies "at," or it indicates motion towards a certain limit; and, for any thing that appears to the contrary in the history of the eunuch's baptism, that limit may just as well be placed at the nearest verge of the water, as in the middle of it. Thus the LXX. say, Isaiah xxxvi. 2: "The King sent Rabshakeh from Lachish, εἰς, to Jerusalem;" certainly not into it, for the city was not captured. The sons of the Prophets "came, εἰς, to Jordan to cut wood." (2 Kings vi. 4.) They did not, we suppose, go into the water to perform that work. Peter was bid to "go, εἰς, to the sea, and cast a hook," not surely to go into the sea; and our Lord, Matthew v. 1, "went up, εἰς, to a mountain," but not into it. The corresponding preposition

$\epsilon\kappa$ , which signifies, when used of place, "from," "out of," must be measured by the meaning of  $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ . When  $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  means "into," then  $\epsilon\kappa$  means "out of;" but when it means simply "to," then  $\epsilon\kappa$  can express no more than "from." Thus this passage is nothing to the purpose of the immersionists.

The next proof relied upon in favour of immersion, is John iii. 22, 23: "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in  $\text{\AA}$ Enon near to Salim, because there was much water there; and they came, and were baptized." The immersionists can see no reason for either Jesus or John baptizing where there was much water, but that they plunged their converts. The true reason for this has, however, been already given. Where could the multitudes who came for baptism be assembled? Clearly, not in houses. The preaching was in the fields; and since the rite which was to follow a ministry which made such an impression, and drew together such crowds, was baptism, the necessity of the case must lead the Baptist to Jordan, or to some other district, where, if a river was wanting, fountains at least existed. The necessity was equal in this case, whether the mode of baptism were that of aspersion, of pouring, or of immersion.

The Baptists, however, have magnified  $\text{\AA}$ Enon, which signifies "the fountain of On," into a "place of many and great waters." Unfortunately, however, no such powerful fountain, sending out many streams of water fit for plunging multitudes into, has ever been found by travellers, although the country has been often visited; and certainly if its streams had been of the copious and remarkable character assigned to them, they could not have vanished. It rather appears, however, that the "much water," or "many waters," in the text, refers rather to the whole tract of country, than to the fountain of On itself; because it appears to be given by the Evangelist as the reason why Jesus and his disciples came into the same neighbourhood to baptize. Different baptisms were administered, and, therefore, in different places. The baptism administered by Jesus at this time was one of multitudes; this appears from the remark of one of John's disciples to his



Master: "He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him." The place or places, too, where Jesus baptized, although in the same district, could not be very near, since John's disciple mentions the multitudes who came to be baptized by Jesus, or rather by his disciples, as a piece of information; and thus we find a reason for the mention of the "much water," or "many waters," with reference to the district of country itself, and not to the single fountain of On. The tract had probably many fountains in it, which, as being a peculiarity in a country not generally so distinguished, would lead to the use of the expression, "much water," although not one of these fountains or wells might be sufficient to allow of the plunging of numbers of people, and probably was not. Indeed, if the disciples of Jesus baptized by immersion, the immersionists are much more concerned to discover "much water," "many waters," "large and deep streams," somewhere else in the district than at Ænon; because it is plain from the narrative, that the number of candidates for John's baptism had greatly fallen off at that time, and that the people now generally flocked to Christ. Hence the remark of John, verse 30, when his disciples had informed him that Jesus was baptizing in the neighbourhood, and that "all men came to him,"—"He must increase, I must decrease." Hence also the observation of the Evangelist, in the first verse of the next chapter: "The Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John."

As these instances all so plainly fail to serve the cause of immersion, we need not dwell upon the others. The improbability of three thousand persons being immersed on the day of Pentecost, has been already mentioned. The baptism of Saul, of Lydia, of the Philippian jailer, and of the family of Cornelius, are all instances of house-baptism; and, for that reason, are still less likely to have been by plunging. The immersionists, indeed, invent "tanks," or "baths," for this purpose, in all these houses; but, as nothing of the kind appears on the face of the history, or is even incidentally suggested, suppositions prove nothing.

Thus all the presumptions before mentioned, against the practice of immersion, lie full against it, without any relief from the Scriptures themselves. Not one instance can be shown of that practice from the New Testament; whilst, so far as baptism was emblematical of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of immersion wholly destroys its signification. In fact, if the true mode of baptism be immersion only, then must we wholly give up the phrase, “the baptism of the Holy Spirit,” which in any other mode than that of pouring out was never administered.

The only argument left for the advocates of immersion is the supposed allusion to the mode of baptism contained in the words of St. Paul, Rom. vi. 3, 4: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism, into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” It is necessary, however, to quote the next verses also, which are dependent upon the foregoing: “For if we have been planted together,” still by baptism, “in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.” Verses 5—7 Why then do not the advocates of immersion go forward to these verses, so inseparably connected with those they are so ready to quote, and show us a resemblance, not only between baptism by immersion, and being buried with Christ; but also between immersion, and being “planted with Christ?” If the allusion of the Apostle is to the planting of a young tree in the earth, there is clearly but a very partial, not a total, immersion in the case; and if it be to grafting a branch upon a tree, the resemblance is still more imperfect. Still further, as the Apostle in the same connexion speaks of our being “crucified with Christ,” and that also by baptism, why do they not show us how immersion in water resembles the nailing of a body to a cross?

But this striking and important text is not to be explained

by a fancied resemblance between a burial, as they choose to call it, of the body in water, and the burial of Christ; as if a dip or a plunge could have any resemblance to that separation from the living, and that laying aside of a body in the sepulchre, which burial implies. This forced thought darkens and enervates the whole passage, instead of bringing forth its powerful sentiments into clearer view. The manifest object of the Apostle, in the whole of this part of his epistle, was to show, that the doctrine of justification by faith alone, which he had just been establishing, could not in any true believer lead to licentiousness of life. "What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" The reason then which is given by the Apostle why true believers cannot continue in sin, is, that they are "dead to sin," which is his answer to the objection. Now, this mystical death to sin he proceeds to attribute to the instrumentality of baptism, taking it to be an act of that faith in Christ of which it was the external expression; and then he immediately runs into a favourite comparison, which under various forms occurs in his writings, sometimes accompanied with the same allusion to baptism, and sometimes referring only to "faith" as the instrument,—a comparison between the mystical death, burial, and resurrection of believers, and the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. This is the comparison of the text; not a comparison between our mystical death, and baptism; nor between baptism, and the death and burial of Christ; either of which lay wide of the Apostle's intention. Baptism, as an act of faith, is, in fact, expressly made, not a figure of the effects which follow, as stated in the text, but the means of effecting them. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" we enter by this means into the experience of its efficacy in effecting a mystical death in us; in other words, we die with him, or, as it is expressed in verse 6, "our old man is crucified with him." Still further, "by baptism," *δια το βαπτισματος*, through, or by means of, baptism, "we are buried with him;" we not only die to sin and the world,

but we are separated wholly from it, as the body of Christ was separated from the living world, when laid in the sepulchre ; the connexion between sin and the world and us is completely broken, as those who are buried and put out of sight are no longer reckoned among men ; nay, as the slave (for the Apostle brings in this figure also) is by death and burial wholly put out of the power of his former master, so “that we should not serve sin ; for he that is dead is freed from sin.” But we also mystically rise with him ; “that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life,” having new connexions, new habits, new enjoyments, and new hopes. We have a similar passage in Col. ii. 12, and it has a similar interpretation : “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” In the preceding verse the Apostle had been speaking of the mystical death of Christians, under the phrase, “putting off the body of the sins of the flesh ;” then, as in his Epistle to the Romans, he adds our mystical burial with Christ, which is a heightened representation of death ; and then also our rising again with Christ. Here, too, all these three effects are attributed to baptism as the means. We put off the body of sins “by the circumcision of Christ,” that is, as we have seen, by Christian circumcision or baptism ; we are buried with him by baptism ; *ἐν* being obviously used here, like *διὰ*, to denote the instrument ; and by baptism we rise with him into a new life.

Now to institute a comparison between a mode of baptism and the burial of Christ, wholly destroys the meaning of the passage ; for how can the Apostle speak of baptism as an emblem of Christ’s burial, when he argues from it as the instrument of our death unto sin, and separation from it by a mystical burial ? Nor is baptism here made use of as the emblem of our own spiritual death, burial, and resurrection. As an emblem, even immersion, though it might put forth a clumsy type of burial and rising again, is wanting in not being emblematical of death ; and yet all three, our mystical death, burial, and rising again, are distinctly spoken of, and must all

be found represented in some type. But the type made use of by the Apostle is manifestly not baptism, but the death, the burial, and the resurrection of our Lord ; and in this view he pursues this bold and impressive figure to even the verge of allegory, in the succeeding verses : “ For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him ; knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more ; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once ; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God ; likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

In the absence, therefore, of all proof, that, in any instance found in the New Testament, baptism was administered by immersion ; with so many presumptions against that indecent practice as have been stated ; with the decisive evidence also of a designed correspondence between the baptism, the pouring out, of the Holy Spirit, and the baptism, the pouring out, of water ; we may conclude, with confidence, that the latter was the apostolic mode of administering that ordinance ; and that first washing, and then immersion, were introduced later, towards the latter end of the second century, along with several other superstitious additions to this important sacrament, originating in that “ will-worship ” which presumed to destroy the simplicity of God’s ordinances, under pretence of \* rendering them more emblematical and impressive. Even if immersion had been the original mode of baptizing, we should, in

\* Baptism, as an emblem, points out, 1. The washing away of the guilt and pollution of sin. 2. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit. In Scripture it is made an emblem of these two, and of these only. Some of the superstitions above alluded to sin, therefore, by excess ; but immersion sins by defect. It retains the emblematical character of the rite as to the washing away of sin ; but it loses it entirely as to the gift of the Holy Ghost ; and beyond the washing away of sin, is an emblem of nothing for which we have any scriptural authority to make it emblematical. Immersion, therefore, as distinct from every other mode of applying water to the body, means nothing. To say that it figures our spiritual death and resurrection, has, we have seen, no authority from the texts used to prove it ; and to make a sudden pop under water to be emblematical of burial is as far-fetched a conceit as any which adorns the Emblems of Quarles, without any portion of the ingenuity.

the absence of any command on the subject, direct or implied, have thought the church at liberty to accommodate the manner of applying water to the body in the name of the Trinity, in which the essence of the rite consists, to different climates and manners ; but it is satisfactory to discover that all the attempts made to impose upon Christians a practice repulsive to the feelings, dangerous to the health, and offensive to delicacy, is destitute of all scriptural authority, and of really primitive practice.

## CHAPTER IV.

### *The Institutions of the Church :—The Lord's Supper.*

THE agreement and difference between baptism and the Lord's supper are well stated by the Church of Scotland in its Catechism: "The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper agree, in that the author of both is God; the spiritual part of both is, Christ and his benefits; both are seals of the same covenant; to be dispensed by Ministers of the Gospel, and none other; and to be continued in the church of Christ until his second coming." "These sacraments differ, in that baptism is to be administered but once with water,—and that even to infants; whereas the Lord's supper is to be administered often, in the elements of bread and wine, to represent and exhibit Christ as spiritual nourishment to the soul, and to confirm our continuance and growth in him, and that only to such as are of years, and ability to examine themselves."

As baptism was substituted for circumcision, so the Lord's supper was put by our Saviour in the place of the passover; and was instituted immediately after celebrating that ordinance for the last time with his disciples. The passover was an eminent type of our Lord's sacrifice, and of its benefits; and since he was about to fulfil that symbolical rite which from age to age had continued to exhibit it to the faith and hope of ancient saints, it could have no place under the new dispensation. Christ in person became the true passover; and a new rite was necessary to commemorate the spiritual deliverance of men, and to convey and confirm its benefits. The circumstances of its institution are explanatory of its nature and design.

On the night when the first-born of Egypt were slain, the children of Israel were commanded to take a lamb for every house, to kill it, and to sprinkle the blood upon the posts of

their doors, so that the destroying angel might pass over the houses of all who had attended to this injunction. Not only were the first-born children thus preserved alive, but the effect was the deliverance of the whole nation from their bondage in Egypt, and their becoming the visible church and people of God by virtue of a special covenant. In commemoration of these events the feast of the passover was made annual, and at that time all the males of Judea assembled before the Lord in Jerusalem; a lamb was provided for every house; the blood was poured under the altar by the Priests, and the lamb was eaten by the people in their tents or houses. At this domestic and religious feast, every master of a family took the cup of thanksgiving, and gave thanks with his family to the God of Israel. As soon, therefore, as our Lord, acting as the master of his family, the disciples, had finished this the usual paschal ceremony, he proceeded to a new and distinct action: "He took bread," the bread then on the table, "and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave to them, saying, This is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper," the cup with the wine which had been used in the paschal supper, "saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you;" or, as it is expressed by St. Matthew, "And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

That this was the institution of a standing rite, and not a temporary action to be confined to the disciples then present with him, is made certain from 1 Cor. xi. 23—26: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered to you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said. Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."



From these words we learn, 1. That St. Paul received a special revelation as to this ordinance, which must have had a higher object than the mere commemoration of an historical fact, and must be supposed to have been made for the purpose of enjoining it upon him to establish this rite in the churches raised up by him, and of enabling him rightly to understand its authority and purport, where he found it already appointed by the first founders of the first churches. 2. That the command of Christ, "This do in remembrance of me," which was originally given to the disciples present with Christ at the last passover, is laid by St. Paul upon the Corinthians. 3. That he regarded the Lord's supper as a rite to be often celebrated, and that in all future time until the Lord himself should come to judge the world. The perpetual obligation of this ordinance cannot, therefore, be reasonably disputed.

Of the nature of this great and affecting rite of Christianity, different and very opposite opinions have been formed, arising partly from the elliptical and figurative modes of expression adopted by Christ at its institution; but more especially from the influence of superstition upon some, and the extreme of affected rationalism upon others.

The first is the monstrous theory of the Church of Rome, as contradictory to the holy Scriptures, whose words it professes to receive in their literal meaning, as it is revolting to the senses and reason of mankind.

"It is conceived that the words, 'This is my body; This is my blood,' are to be understood in their most literal sense; that when Jesus pronounced these words, he changed, by his almighty power, the bread upon the table into his body, and the wine into his blood, and really delivered his body and blood into the hands of his Apostles; and that at all times when the Lord's supper is administered, the Priest, by pronouncing these words with a good intention, has the power of making a similar change. This change is known by the name of 'transubstantiation;' the propriety of which name is conceived to consist in this, that although the bread and wine are not changed in figure, taste, weight, or any other accident, it is believed that the substance of them is completely destroyed;

that in place of it, the substance of the body and blood of Christ, although clothed with all the sensible properties of bread and wine, is truly present ; and that the persons who receive what has been consecrated by pronouncing these words, do not receive bread and wine, but literally partake of the body and blood of Christ, and really eat his flesh, and drink his blood. It is further conceived, that the bread and wine thus changed are presented by the Priest to God ; and he receives the name of Priest, because in laying them upon the altar he offers to God a sacrifice, which, although it be distinguished from all others by being without the shedding of blood, is a true propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the dead and of the living,—the body and blood of Christ, which were presented on the cross, again presented in the sacrifice of the mass. It is conceived that the materials of this sacrifice, being truly the body and blood of Christ, possess an intrinsic virtue, which does not depend upon the disposition of him who receives them, but operates immediately upon all who do not obstruct the operation by a mortal sin. Hence it is accounted of great importance for the salvation of the sick and dying, that parts of these materials should be sent to them ; and it is understood that the practice of partaking in private of a small portion of what the Priest has thus transubstantiated, is, in all respects, as proper and salutary as joining with others in the Lord's supper. It is further conceived that as the bread and wine, when converted into the blood of Christ, are a natural object of reverence and adoration to Christians, it is highly proper to worship them upon the altar ; and that it is expedient to carry them about in solemn procession, that they may receive the homage of all who meet them. What had been transubstantiated was therefore lifted up for the purpose of receiving adoration, both when it was shown to the people at the altar, and when it was carried about. Hence arose that expression in the Church of Rome, ' the elevation of the host,' *elevatio hostiæ*. But as the wine in being carried about was exposed to accidents inconsistent with the veneration due to the body and blood of Christ, it became customary to send only the bread ; and, in order to satisfy those who for this reason did not

receive the wine, they were taught, that, as the bread was changed into the body of Christ, they partook by concomitancy of the blood with the body. In process of time the people were not allowed to partake of the cup; and it was said, that, when Jesus spake these words, 'Drink ye all of it,' he was addressing himself only to his Apostles, so that his command was fulfilled when the Priests, the successors of the Apostles, drank of the cup, although the people were excluded. And thus the last part of this system conspired with the first in exalting the Clergy very far above the laity. For the same persons who had the power of changing bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, and who presented what they had thus made, as a sacrifice for the sins of others, enjoyed the partaking of the cup, while communion in one kind only was permitted to the people."\*

So violently are these notions opposed to the common sense of mankind, that the ground to which the Romish writers have always been driven in their defence, is the authority of their Church, and the necessity of implicit faith in its interpretations of Scripture; principles which shut out the use of Scripture entirely, and open the door to every heresy and fanatical folly. But for the ignorance and superstition of Europe during the middle ages, this monstrous perversion of a sacred rite could not have been effected, and even then it was not established as an article of faith without many struggles. Almost all writers on the Protestant controversy will furnish a sufficient confutation of this capital attempt to impose upon the credulity of mankind; and to them, should it need any refutation, the reader may be referred.

The mind of Luther, so powerful to throw off dogmas which had nothing but human authority to support them, was, as to the sacrament, held in the bonds of early association. He concluded that the body and blood of Christ are really present in the Lord's supper; but, aware of the absurdities and self-contradictions of transubstantiation, he laid hold of a doctrine which some writers in the Romish Church itself, had

\* Bishop Tomline on the Articles.

continued to prefer to the Papal dogma above stated. This was designated by the term "consubstantiation," which allows that the bread and wine remain the same after consecration as before. Thus he escapes the absurdity of contradicting the very senses of men. It was held, however, by Luther, that though the bread and wine remain unchanged, yet that, together with them, the body and blood of Christ are literally received by the communicants. Some of his immediate followers did not, however, admit more on this point, than that the body and blood of Christ were really present in the sacrament; but that the manner of that presence was an inexplicable mystery. Yet in some important respects, Luther and the Consubstantialists wholly escaped the errors of the Church of Rome as to this sacrament. They denied that it was a sacrifice; and that the presence of the body and blood of Christ gave to it any physical virtue acting independently of the disposition of the receiver; and that it rendered the elements the objects of adoration. Their error, therefore, may be considered rather of a speculative than of a practical nature; and was adopted probably in deference to what was conceived to be the literal meaning of the words of Christ when the Lord's supper was instituted.

A third view was held by some of Luther's contemporaries, which has been thus described: "Carlostadt, a Professor with Luther in the University of Wittenberg, and Zuinglius, a native of Switzerland, the founder of the Reformed churches, or those Protestant churches which are not Lutheran, taught that the bread and wine in the Lord's supper are the signs of the absent body and blood of Christ; that when Jesus said, 'This is my body, This is my blood,' he used a figure exactly of the same kind with that, by which, according to the abbreviations continually practised in ordinary speech, the sign is often put for the thing signified. As this figure is common, so there were two circumstances which would prevent the Apostles from misunderstanding it when used in the institution of the Lord's supper. The one was, that they saw the body of Jesus then alive, and therefore could not suppose that they were eating it. The other was, that they had just been partaking of a Jewish festival, in the institution of which the very same figure

had been used. For in the night in which the children of Israel escaped out of Egypt, God said of the lamb which he commanded every house to eat and slay, 'It is the Lord's passover;' (Exod. xii. 11;) not meaning that it was the action of the Lord passing over every house, but the token and pledge of that action. It is admitted by all Christians, that there is such a figure used in one part of the institution. When our Lord says, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood,' none suppose him to mean the cup is the covenant; but all believe that he means to call it 'the memorial,' or 'the sign,' or 'the seal, of the covenant.' If it be understood, that, agreeably to the analogy of language, he uses a similar figure when he says, 'This is my body,' and that he means nothing more than 'This is the sign of my body,' we are delivered from all the absurdities implied in the literal interpretation, to which the Roman Catholics think it necessary to adhere. We give the words a more natural interpretation than the Lutherans do, who consider, 'This is my body,' as intended to express a proposition which is totally different, 'My body is with this;' and we escape from the difficulties in which they are involved by their forced interpretation.

"Farther: By this method of interpretation, there is no ground left for that adoration which the Church of Rome pays to the bread and wine; for they are only the signs of that which is believed to be absent. There is no ground for accounting the Lord's supper, to the dishonour of 'the High Priest of our profession,' a new sacrifice presented by an earthly Priest; for the bread and wine are only the memorials of that sacrifice which was once offered on the cross. And, lastly, this interpretation destroys the Popish idea of a physical virtue in the Lord's supper; for if the bread and wine are signs of what is absent, their use must be to excite the remembrance of it; but this is a use which cannot possibly exist with regard to any but those whose minds are thereby put into a proper frame; and, therefore, the Lord's supper becomes, instead of a charm, a mental exercise, and the efficacy of it arises, not *ex opere operato*, but *ex opere operantis*."

With much truth, this opinion falls short of the whole

truth ; and therefore it has been made the basis of that view of the Lord's supper which reduces it to a mere religious commemoration of the death of Christ, with this addition, that it has a natural fitness to produce salutary emotions, to possess our minds with religious reflections, and to strengthen virtuous resolutions. Some Divines of the Church of England, and the Socinians generally, have adopted, and endeavoured to defend, this interpretation.

The fourth opinion is that of the Reformed churches, and was taught with great success by Calvin. It has been thus well-epitomized by Dr. Hill :—

“ He knew that former attempts to reconcile the systems of Luther and Zuinglius had proved fruitless. But he saw the importance of uniting Protestants upon a point, with respect to which they agreed in condemning the errors of the Church of Rome ; and his zeal in renewing the attempt was probably quickened by the sincere friendship which he entertained for Melancthon, who was the successor of Luther, while he himself had succeeded Zuinglius in conducting the reformation in Switzerland. He thought that the system of Zuinglius did not come up to the force of the expressions used in Scripture ; and, although he did not approve of the manner in which the Lutherans explain these expressions, it appeared to him that there was a sense in which the full significance of them might be preserved, and a great part of the Lutheran language might continue to be used. As he agreed with Zuinglius, in thinking that the bread and wine were the signs of the body and blood of Christ, which were not locally present, he renounced both transubstantiation and consubstantiation. He agreed farther with Zuinglius, in thinking that the use of these signs, being a memorial of the sacrifice once offered on the cross, was intended to produce a moral effect. But he taught, that to all who remember the death of Christ in a proper manner, Christ, by the use of these signs, is spiritually present,—present to their minds ; and he considered this spiritual presence as giving a significance, that goes far beyond the Socinian sense, to these words of Paul : ‘ The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of

Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?’ It is not the blessing pronounced which makes any change upon the cup; but to all who join with becoming affection in the thanksgiving then uttered in the name of the congregation, Christ is spiritually present, so that they may emphatically be said to partake, *κοινωνεῖν, μετεχειν*, of his body and blood; because his body and blood, being spiritually present, convey the same nourishment to their souls, the same quickening to the spiritual life, as bread and wine do to the natural life. Hence Calvin was led to connect the discourse in John vi. with the Lord’s supper; not in that literal sense which is agreeable to Popish and Lutheran ideas, as if the body of Christ was really eaten, and his blood really drunk, by any; but in a sense agreeable to the expression of our Lord in the conclusion of that discourse, ‘The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life;’ that is, When I say to you, ‘Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him; he shall live by me, for my flesh is meat indeed,’ you are to understand these words, not in a literal but in a spiritual sense. The spiritual sense adopted by the Socinians is barely this, that the doctrine of Christ is the food of the soul, by cherishing a life of virtue here, and the hope of a glorious life hereafter. The Calvinists think, that into the full meaning of the figure used in these words, there enter not merely the exhortations and instructions which a belief of the Gospel affords, but also that union between Christ and his people which is the consequence of faith, and that communication of grace and strength by which they are quickened in well-doing, and prepared for the discharge of every duty.

“According to this system, the full benefit of the Lord’s supper is peculiar to those who partake worthily. For while all who eat the bread and drink the wine may be said to show the Lord’s death, and may also receive some devout impressions, they only to whom Jesus is spiritually present share in that spiritual nourishment which arises from partaking of his body and blood. According to this system, eating and drinking unworthily has a further sense than enters into the Socinian

system; and it becomes the duty of every Christian to examine himself, not only with regard to his knowledge, but also with regard to his general conduct, before he eats of that bread and drinks of that cup. It becomes also the duty of those who have the inspection of Christian societies, to exclude from this ordinance persons, of whom there is every reason to believe that they are strangers to the sentiments which it presupposes, and without which none are prepared for holding that communion with Jesus which it implies.”\*

With this view the doctrine of the Church of England seems mainly to agree, except that we may perhaps perceive in her services a few expressions somewhat favourable to the views of Luther and Melancthon, whose authority had great weight with Archbishop Cranmer. This, however, appears only in certain phrases; for the twenty-eighth article declares with sufficient plainness, that “the body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the supper only after a heavenly and spiritual manner: And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the supper, is faith.” “Some of our early English Reformers,” says Bishop Tomline, “were Lutherans, and consequently they were at first disposed to lean towards consubstantiation; but they seem soon to have discovered their error, for in the articles of 1552, it is expressly said, ‘A faithful man ought not either to believe or openly confess the real and bodily presence, as they term it, of Christ’s flesh and blood in the sacrament of the Lord’s supper.’ This part of the article was omitted in 1562, probably with a view to give less offence to those who maintained the corporal presence, and to comprehend as many as possible in the established Church.”† The article as it now stands, and not particular expressions in the Liturgy, must, however, be taken to be the opinion of the Church of England upon this point, and it substantially agrees with the New Testament.

The sacramental character of this ordinance is the first point to be established, in order to a true conception of its nature and import. It is more than a commemorative rite, it is

\* Theological Lectures.

† Exposition of the Articles.



commemorative sacramentally ; in other words, it is a commemorative sign and seal of the covenant of our redemption.

The first proof of this may be deduced from our Lord's words used in the institution of the ordinance. "This is my body, This is my blood," are words which show a most intimate connexion between the elements, and that which was represented by them, the sacrificial offering of the body and blood of Christ, as the price of our redemption ; they were the signs of what was given for us, surrendered to death in our room and stead, that we might have the benefit of liberation from eternal death. Again : "This is the new testament," or covenant, "in my blood." The covenant itself was ratified by the blood of Christ, and it is therefore called by St. Paul, "the blood of the everlasting covenant ;" and the cup had so intimate a connexion with that covenant, as to represent it and the means of its establishment, or of its acquiring validity, —the shedding of the blood of our Saviour. It is clear, therefore, that the rite of the Lord's supper is a covenant rite, and consequently a sacrament ; a visible sign and seal on the part of Him who made the covenant, that it was established in, and ratified by, the sacrificial death of Christ.

As it bears this covenant or sacramental character on the part of the Institutor, so also on the part of the recipients. They were all to eat the bread in remembrance of Christ ; in remembrance, certainly, of his death in particular ; yet not as a mere historical event, but of his death as sacrificial ; and therefore the commemoration was to be on their part an acknowledgment of the doctrine of the vicarious and propitiatory nature of the death of Christ, and an act of faith in it. Then as to the cup, they were commanded to drink of it, for a reason also particularly given : "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins : " The recognition therefore implied in the act, was not merely that Christ's blood was shed ; but that it was shed as the blood of the new covenant, and for the remission of sins ; a recognition which could only take place in consequence of faith in his blood, as the blood of an atonement. Again, says St. Paul, as taught by the particular revelation he received as to the

Lord's supper, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show" or publish "the Lord's death until he come;" which publication of his death was not the mere declaration of the fact of the Lord's death, but of his death, according to the apostolic doctrine, as the true propitiation for sin, the benefits of which were to be received by faith. Thus then we see, in the Lord's supper, the visible token and pledge of a covenant of mercy in the blood of Christ, exhibited by God its author; and on the part of man a visible acknowledgment of this covenant so ratified by the sacrifice of Christ, and an act of entire faith in its truth and efficacy in order to the remission of sins, and the conferring of all other spiritual benefits. As a sign, it exhibits, 1. The infinite love of God to the world, who gave "his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." 2. The love of Christ, who "died the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." 3. The extreme nature of his sufferings, which were unto death. 4. The vicarious and sacrificial character of that death, as a sin-offering and a propitiation; in virtue of which only, a covenant of grace was entered into with man by the offended God. 5. The benefits derived from it through believing,—remission of sins; and the nourishment of the soul in spiritual life and vigour, by virtue of a vital communion with Christ, so that it is advanced and perfected in holiness, until he come to confer upon his disciples the covenanted blessing of eternal life. As a seal it is a constant assurance, on the part of God, of the continuance of this covenant of redemption in full undiminished force from age to age; it is a pledge to every penitent who believes in Christ, and receives this sacrament in profession of his entire reliance upon the merits of Christ's passion for forgiveness, that he is an object of merciful regard and acceptance; there is in it also, as to every one who thus believes and is accepted, a constant exhibition of Christ as the spiritual food of the soul, to be received by faith, that he may grow thereby; and a renewed assurance of the bestowment of the full grace of the new covenant, in the accomplishment of all its promises, both in this life and in that which is to come. In every celebration, the

sign of all the gracious acts, provisions, and hopes, is exhibited, and God condescends thus to repeat his pledges of faithfulness and love to the church of Christ, purchased by his blood. The members of that church, on the other hand, renew their acceptance of, and reliance upon, the new covenant; they publish their faith in Christ; they glory in his cross, his sacrificial though shameful death, as the wisdom of God, and the power of God; they feast upon the true Passover Victim by their faith, and they do this with joy and thanksgiving on account of a greater deliverance than that of the Israelites from Egypt, of which they are the subjects. It was this predominance of thanksgiving in celebrating this hallowed rite, which at so early a period of the church attached to the Lord's supper the title of "the eucharist."

We may conclude this view by a few general observations.

1. The very nature of the ordinance of the Lord's supper excludes from participating in it not only open unbelievers, but all who reject the doctrine of the atonement made by the vicarious death of Christ, for "the remission of sins." Such persons have indeed tacitly acknowledged this, by reducing the rite to a mere commemoration of the fact of Christ's death, and of those virtues of humility, benevolence, and patience which his sufferings called forth. If therefore the Lord's supper be in truth much more than this; if it recognise the sacrificial character of Christ's death, and the doctrine of faith in his blood, as necessary to our salvation, this is "an altar of which they have no right to eat" who reject these doctrines; and from the Lord's table all such persons ought to be repelled by Ministers, whenever, from compliance with custom or other motives, they would approach it.

2. It is equally evident that when there is no evidence in persons of true repentance for sin, and of desire for salvation according to the terms of the Gospel, they are disqualified from partaking at "the table of the Lord." They eat and drink unworthily; and fall, therefore, into condemnation. The whole act is, indeed, on their part, an act of bold profanation, or of hypocrisy: They profess by this act to repent, and have no sorrow for sin; they profess to seek deliverance

from its guilt and power, and yet remain willingly under its bondage; they profess to trust in Christ's death for pardon, and are utterly unconcerned respecting either; they profess to feed upon Christ, and hunger and thirst after nothing but the world; they place before themselves the sufferings of Christ, but when they "look upon him whom they have pierced," they do not mourn because of him, and they grossly offend the all-present Majesty of heaven, by thus making light of Christ, and grieving the Holy Spirit.

3. It is a part of Christian discipline in every religious society to prevent such persons from communicating with the church. They are expressly excluded by apostolic authority, as well as by the original institution of this sacrament, which was confined to Christ's disciples; and Ministers would "partake of other men's sins," if knowingly they were to admit to the supper of the Lord those who in their spirit and lives deny him.

4. On the other hand, the table of the Lord is not to be surrounded with superstitious terrors. All are welcome there who truly love Christ, and all who sincerely desire to love, serve, and obey him. All truly penitent persons; all who feel the burden of their sins, and are willing to renounce them; all who take Christ as the sole foundation of their hope, and are ready to commit their eternal interests to the merits of his sacrifice and intercession, are to be encouraged to "draw near with faith, and to take this holy sacrament to their comfort." In it God visibly exhibits and confirms his covenant to them, and he invites them to become parties to it, by the act of their receiving the elements of the sacrament in faith.

5. For the frequency of celebrating this ordinance, we have no rule in the New Testament. The early Christians observed it every Sabbath; and exclusion from it was considered a severe sentence of the church, when only temporary. The expression of the Apostle, "as often as ye eat this bread," intimates that the practice of communion was frequent; and, perhaps, the general custom in this country of a monthly administration will come up to the spirit of the ancient institution. That it was designed, like the passover, to be

an annual celebration only, has no evidence from Scripture, and is contradicted by the most ancient practice.

6. The habitual neglect of this ordinance by persons who profess a true faith in Christ, is highly censurable. We speak not now of Quakers and Mystics, who reject it altogether, in the face of the letter of their Bibles; but of many who seldom or never communicate, principally from habits of inattention to an obligation which they do not profess to deny. In this case a plain command of Christ is violated, though not perhaps with direct intention; and the benefit of that singularly affecting mean of grace is lost, in which our Saviour renews to us the pledges of his love, repeats the promises of his covenant, and calls for invigorated exercises of our faith, only to feed us the more richly with the bread that comes down from heaven. If a peculiar condemnation falls upon them who partake unworthily, then a peculiar blessing must follow from partaking worthily; and it therefore becomes the duty of every Minister to explain the obligation, and to show the advantages, of this sacrament, and earnestly to enforce its regular observance upon all those who give satisfactory evidence of "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."

END OF THE THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTES.

C A T E C H I S M

ON

THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY,

&c.

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CHAPTER I.

*Definitions and Explanations.*

YOUTH.—WHAT is Christianity ?

TEACHER.—The doctrines, morals, and manner of worship taught by Christ and his Apostles, and recorded in the New Testament.

Y.—What is Judaism ?

T.—The religion and laws of the Jews, a people descended from Abraham. These are contained in the books of the Old Testament.

Y.—What is the religion of the Patriarchs ?

T.—The belief and worship of the early progenitors of the different nations and families of men before the introduction of idolatry. The Patriarchs, eminently so called, lived before the giving of the law by Moses ; and the most illustrious of these were Adam, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Job.

Y.—What is meant by revelation ?

T.—A supernatural communication of truth from God to man, by which we are instructed in the will of God respecting us, both as to what we are to believe, and to do ; how we are to worship him ; what we may hope from his mercy, or fear from his displeasure.



# CATECHISM

ON

## THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY,

&c.

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Y.—Does God make revelations of his will to every man ?

T.—Not immediate revelations. He revealed his will first to Adam ; then to Noah, and Abraham, and others among the Patriarchs ; to Moses and the Prophets ; and finally by Christ and his Apostles. We acknowledge no other revelations ; and these were intended, in different degrees, for the benefit of mankind at large.

Y.—Have all these revelations been recorded ?

T — No. Revelation is distinguished into oral and written. The revelations which were made to the Patriarchs were transmitted by word of mouth, and handed down from one age to another. For this reason revelation among them is said to be oral, or traditional ; and the long duration of their lives preserved it from being corrupted. These original truths, doctrines, and traditional facts, were thus transmitted to Moses, who wrote them, and the laws which he received from God in the wilderness of Sinai, in the Five Books which bear his name, and are called the Pentateuch. The other books of the Old Testament, whether historical, poetical, or prophetical, were written by inspired men called Prophets, by the command of God, and compose the book called the Old Testament. Our Lord committed nothing to writing ; but his life and discourses were written after his resurrection by four of his disciples, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, who “brought all things to their remembrance.” The book of the Acts of the Apostles, which contains an account of the first planting of Christianity in the world, was written by St. Luke ; the Epistles and the Revelation by different Apostles, all under the influence of the Holy Spirit. These collectively are denominated the New Testament ; and the Old and New Testaments we emphatically call “the word of God.”

Y.—Has this collection of divine revelations any other name ?

T.—Yes ; it is also called “the Bible,” which signifies “the Book,” to denote its eminence and supreme excellence. The Christian religion is also called “the Gospel,” which signifies “the good news.” The Jewish religion is called

“the law,” because of the commands, moral, ceremonial, and judicial, which were given to the Jews by Moses.

Y.—Is not the Bible sometimes called “the Old and New Testament?”

T.—Yes ; because in them God enters into covenant with man, and engages to bestow certain blessings upon them of his own good pleasure. This covenant under the law was made specially with the Jews, but under the Gospel with both Jews and Gentiles. The former is for this, and for some other reasons, called “the Old Testament,” or “Covenant ;” the latter “the New,” and is perfect, universal, and shall never pass away.

Y.—Pray explain another term often used,—dispensation.

T.—This word signifies a dispensing, or bestowing ; and, in the theological sense, means the truth and grace which have been dispensed in different periods of the world by successive revelations of the will and mercy of God to mankind. For this reason we say the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, or Jewish, and the Christian dispensations ;—the first commencing with Adam, and reaching to the giving of the law by Moses ; the second, from that event to the death of Christ ; the third, from the death of Christ to the end of the world.

Y.—All this I comprehend ; but I would now be more fully instructed in the proofs that these dispensations are from God ; in other words, how the revelations contained in the Old and New Testaments can be shown to be of divine authority.

T.—This is a laudable desire ; and we will proceed to these proofs step by step, that “you may know the certainty of the things wherein you have been instructed.”

## CHAPTER II.

*A Revelation from God highly probable and necessary.*

T.—LET our first inquiry be, whether it is probable that man has been left without a revelation of the will of God. I ask you, first, What is moral agency ?

Y.—Agency is the doing of any thing ; and moral agency is the doing of what is good or evil, right or wrong. These are called moral acts, in opposition to natural acts, as walking flying, eating, &c., which, in themselves, are neither good nor evil, and incapable of being praised or blamed.

T.—Why do you call some actions good or evil, and therefore praise or blame them ?

Y.—Because they are agreeable or opposed to some rule or law, which determines their nature.

T.—By this law do you mean, the law of your own or any other country ?

Y.—Certainly not ; for if all national laws were abolished, the actions which mankind have generally agreed to call good or evil would still be regarded as such, and be praised or blamed accordingly.

T.—If there has been this general agreement among mankind, when did they agree to form those rules which make certain actions good or evil ?

Y.—If they did so agree, it must have been at a very early period, even before the forming of mankind into states and nations ; for the laws of states are clearly built upon a previous agreement among men, that some actions are good and beneficial, and that others are evil and injurious, and ought to be restrained, as murder, theft, and other vices which affect society. But we have no record of any solemn discussion of so weighty a subject, or of any agreement among mankind to lay down rules or laws which should first determine the good or evil of actions.

T.—But is there no proof that mankind, in the earliest ages of the world, considered various actions as determined to be good and evil by a higher authority than that of man ?

Y.—Yes, certainly, all antiquity agrees in making a distinction between things good and evil, and in representing one to be pleasing, and the other displeasing, to God ; one to be the object of reward, and the other of punishment ; and consequently, in acknowledging a will or law of God on these subjects : But what do you conclude from this ?

T.—That all the evidence which arises from human history goes to establish this point,—that a rule was always known in the world by which men's actions were judged of as good or evil, and that this rule was the will of God, which, in some mode, was ascertainable by his creatures.

Y.—This seems to be indisputable.

T.—Then this makes it highly probable that, in the earliest ages, God made an express revelation of his will to mankind ?

Y.—This is also highly probable from the facts just now mentioned.

T.—Let me then ask you, whether man is not a created being ?

Y.—This is certain ; for he is born, and changes, and dies, and is therefore dependent upon some power which he cannot resist.

T.—Then there must have been a first pair from whom we all have descended ?

Y.—This also is clear ; and as they could not create themselves, they must have been immediately created by God.

T.—Do you see nothing in the nature of man to distinguish him from other animals ?

Y.—Yes : I especially observe that he is capable of good and evil actions, which they are not ; that he is therefore a subject of reward and punishment ; that he is capable of reflecting with pleasure or dissatisfaction upon his actions, which faculty we call conscience.

T.—Does not then the very nature which his Maker has

given him bear an evident relation to law or rule, and to reward and punishment ?

Y.—Most clearly ; and from this I see another strong presumption arise, that a creature who by his Creator is in his very nature constituted to be capable of moral government, must, from the beginning of his existence, have been placed under a moral law.

T.—But does not a moral law manifestly suppose a revelation ?

Y.—Truly ; because law, being the will of a superior, must be known before it can be obligatory ; and it belongs to a legislator to promulgate, or, in other words, to reveal his laws.

T.—But suppose it said, that man might infer the will of God from natural objects, and the course of divine government, without an express revelation, how would you reply ?

Y.—I would say, 1. That then the will of God on moral subjects must have been more imperfectly known in the first age than in the following ages of the world, because men had had less time for observing nature, and less experience of the course of Providence. But this is contrary to all history and all tradition. 2. That by inference they could only at best obtain imperfect intimations of the will of God. And, 3. That the will of God would thus be made to depend upon the opinions of men, that is, upon the justness and fairness of their inferences, and would therefore be a different rule of action in different men ; a conclusion which cannot be maintained by any sober person.

T.—Your answer is forcible ; but you may add, that if man had been left to infer the will of God from the works of nature, and the course of God's government of the world, without a direct revelation, there is nothing in either to indicate that God ought to be worshipped ; that he will hear our prayers ; that there is a state of future rewards and punishments ; or that God will pardon those who have broken his laws, or how that pardon must be sought. On all these subjects, which are essential to morality, religion, and hope, the works of nature, and the dispensations of Providence, are

totally silent ; and thus there could have been no system of complete and influential morality, and no authorized religious worship, and no hope beyond the grave, without an express revelation.

Y.—All this appears very manifest : And yet I hear much of the sufficiency of human reason to discover the being and perfections of God from his works ; his will respecting us ; the immortality of the soul ; and other important subjects.

T.—This is the constant theme of infidels ; and yet do you not perceive that none of them have gained their knowledge of these truths from reason, but that they are all indebted for them to revelation ?

Y.—Certainly this is the case with the Deists of the present age ; but how does that apply to the philosophers of Rome, Greece, Egypt, and other ancient countries ?

T.—Just as forcibly. Not any of the most enlightened of them, whose writings remain, or whose opinions we know, ever pretended to be the discoverers of these truths. They speak of them sometimes believingly, sometimes doubtfully, but always as known in the world, and as derived from an earlier age of antiquity.

Y.—You suppose, therefore, that these opinions were derived from a common source ?

T.—Undoubtedly they were transmitted from an earlier age ; for,

1. The wonderful agreement of even the superstitions of all heathen nations, in recognising certain facts of the Mosaic history, is a strong proof, that they are but perversions of the religion and history of the patriarchal times. Plato, one of the wisest and most learned of the ancient Greek philosophers, says, “ After a certain flood, which but few escaped, on the increase of mankind, they had neither letters, writing, nor laws, but obeyed the manners and institutions of their fathers as laws ; and when colonies separated from them, they took an elder for their leader, and in their new settlements retained the customs of their ancestors, those especially which related to their gods, and thus transmitted them to their posterity ; they imprinted them on the minds of their sons ; and they did the

same to their children. This was the origin of right laws, and of the different forms of government."

2. The practice of sacrifice, which may at once be traced into all nations, and to the remotest antiquity, affords an eminent proof of the common origin of religion ; inasmuch as no reason drawn from the nature of the rite itself, or the circumstances of men, can be given for the universality of the practice : And as it is clearly a positive institute, and opposed to the interests of men, it can only be accounted for by an injunction, issued at a very early period of the world, and solemnly imposed.

3. The events, and some of the leading opinions of the earliest ages, mentioned in Scripture, may also be traced among the most barbarous, as well as in the oriental, the Grecian, and the Roman systems of mythology. Such are the formation of the world ; the fall and corruption of man ; the hostility of a powerful and supernatural agent of wickedness under his appropriate and scriptural emblem, the serpent ; the destruction of the world by water ; the re-peopling of it by the sons of Noah ; the expectation of its final destruction by fire ; and, above all, the promise of a great and divine deliverer.

4. All nations have dispersed from the patriarchal seats in Asia ; this has been often satisfactorily proved. All religions, however superstitious, agree in a common origin. All the great masters of human reason in the ancient world had, therefore, heard of God and his perfections ; of moral distinctions ; of man's immortality ; and of a future state. The best of their notions were in the world long before they lived ; the worst only, by which they corrupted the primitive truths, were of their own invention.

Y.—I perceive then that human reason has no claim at all, even in these early ages, to the credit of these discoveries : But tell me how it is, that men who reject the Bible are so confident in ascribing so much power to their unaided reason ?

T.—My answer may, perhaps, surprise you ; but I will prepare you for it by reminding you, that the philosophers of antiquity made no such pretensions, and that this confidence

in human reason is the boast only of men where Christianity is already known. The ancient sages confessed the weakness of their understandings, and their inability to discover truth. Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Cicero, and others, all confess their ignorance and their doubts, on those very subjects which some of the moderns pretend to be clearly discoverable without a revelation; and the only reason which can be given why infidel philosophers of the present age speak with so much assurance as to their own ability to make better discoveries, is, that these discoveries have been actually made by the Bible, and have become so familiar, and, being once revealed, carry so clear a conviction to the reason of man, that, in the pride and forgetfulness of their hearts, they think them so easy as to be quite within the reach of their own efforts, had they not been so assisted. For, as Mr. Locke truly observes, “when truths are once known to us, though by tradition, we are apt to be favourable to our own parts, and ascribe to our own understanding the discovery of what, in reality, we borrowed from others; or, at least, finding we can prove what at first we learned from others, we are forward to conclude it an obvious truth, which, if we had sought, we could not have missed. Many are beholden to revelation who do not acknowledge it. It is no diminishing to revelation, that reason gives its suffrage too to the truths revelation has discovered; but it is our mistake to think, that because reason confirms them to us, we had the first certain knowledge of them from thence, and in that clear evidence we now possess them.”—The answer then to your question is, that if we had had no revelation from God, we should never have heard so much boasting of the strength of reason in man.

Y.—But if the first and fundamental truths of religion were known in the early ages of the world, is it not a proof also of the weakness of man’s reason, that he fell into so many and such ridiculous errors on religious subjects?

T.—It is both a proof of the wickedness of his heart, and the weakness of his reason, and also of the necessity of a new and written revelation being introduced, to restore, enlarge, and perpetuate religious knowledge: For the truth being once



lost, no power of human reason was ever able to restore it; the whole world, both wise and barbarous nations, had sunk into the grossest ignorance at the time of the advent of our Lord; and those parts of the world into which the light of our religion has not yet entered, even where civilization and learning exist, are in the same condition to this day.

Y.—Be pleased to give me some instances of this?

T.—It is not necessary to state particularly, what every one knows to be the fact, that the body of the people were in all nations grossly idolatrous and superstitious, ignorant of God and of moral distinctions, and crediting the most absurd fables, both as to the gods and a future life. But the charge of great ignorance and error lies also against the wisest and most cultivated minds in the pagan world; for,

1. Though the belief of one Supreme Being has been found in many parts of the world, yet the notion of subordinate deities, the immediate dispensers of good and evil to men, and the objects of their fear and worship, has almost equally obtained; and this of necessity destroyed or greatly counteracted the moral influence of that just opinion.

2. The modern idolatry of Hindostan, which in principle differs nothing from that of the ancient world, affords a striking comment upon this point, and indeed is of great importance in enabling us to conceive justly of the true character and practical effects of idolatry in all ages. One supreme being is acknowledged by the Hindoos; but they never worship him, nor think that he concerns himself with human affairs at all. “This being,” says Moore, “is called Brahm, one eternal mind, the self-existing, incomprehensible spirit. To him, however, the Hindoos erect no altars. The objects of their adoration commence with the triad—Brahma, Vishnu, and Seva, which represent the almighty powers of creation, preservation, and destruction.”

3. The learned among the classic Heathen, it is true, occasionally speak nobly concerning God and his attributes; but at the same time they were led by their own imaginations and reasonings to conclusions which neutralize the effect of their sublimer conceptions, and often contradict them. The

eternity of matter, for instance, was held by the Greek and Roman philosophers and by their preceptors, the oriental schools, who thought it absolutely impossible that any thing should be produced from nothing,—thus destroying the notion of creation in its proper sense, and of a supreme Creator.

In like manner, though occasionally we find many excellent things said of the providence of God, all these were weakened or destroyed by other opinions. The Epicurean sect denied the doctrine, and laid it down as a maxim, “that what was blessed and immortal gave neither any trouble to itself nor to others;” a notion which exactly agrees with the system of the modern Hindoos. The Stoics contended for a providence; but in their creed it was counteracted by the doctrine of an absolute necessity, or fate, to which God and matter, or the universe, which consists, as they thought, of both, was immutably subject; and where they allow it, they confine the care of the gods to great affairs only.

Another great principle of religion is the doctrine of a future state of reward and punishment; and though in some form it is recognised in pagan systems, and the traditions of the primitive ages may be traced in their extravagant perversions and fables; its evidence was either greatly diminished, or it was mixed up with notions entirely subversive of the moral effect which it was originally intended to produce.

The doctrine of Aristotle and the Peripatetics gives no countenance to the opinion of the soul’s immortality, or even of its existence after death. Democritus and his followers taught, that the soul is material and mortal;—Heraclitus, that when the soul is purified from moist vapours, it returns into the soul of the universe; if not, it perishes;—Epicurus and his followers, that “when death is, we are not.” The leading men among the Romans, when philosophy was introduced among them, followed the various Greek sects. Cicero doubted. Pliny declares, that the soul and body have no more sense after death than before we were born; Cæsar, “that beyond death there is neither place for care or joy.” The poets, it is true, spoke of a future state of rewards and

punishments ; they had the joys of Elysium and the tortures of Tartarus ; but both philosophers and poets regarded them as vulgar fables.

Thus you see, that “the world by wisdom knew not God ;” and that the very first principles of religion were, for ages, either denied, or corrupted by the most fatal errors.

Y.—But as I have heard much of heathen virtue, I suppose that the morals of Gentile nations were better than their opinions ?

T.—This also is an error. The facts mentioned in their own histories, and by their own satirists and poets, show that morals were universally corrupted, to an extent not known among the worst Christian nations ; and that the descriptions of the state of the heathen world in the New Testament, and especially in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, contain no exaggerations.

1. The slight regard paid to the life of man in all heathen countries cannot have escaped the notice of reflecting minds. Among the Romans, men were murdered in their very pastimes, by being made to fight with wild beasts and with each other ; and though this was sometimes condemned, yet the passion for blood increased, and no war ever caused so great a slaughter as did the gladiatorial combats. They were at first confined to the funerals of great persons. The first show of this kind exhibited in Rome by the Bruti on the death of their father, consisted of three couples ; but afterwards the number greatly increased. Julius Cæsar presented three hundred pairs of gladiators ; and the Emperor Trajan, ten thousand of them, for the entertainment of the people. Sometimes these horrid exhibitions, when the practice had attained its height, deprived Europe of twenty thousand lives in one month.

2. This is further illustrated by the treatment of slaves, which composed so large a portion of the population of ancient states. They knew and acknowledged the evil of murder, and had laws for its punishment ; but to this despised class of human beings they did not extend the rule ; nor was killing them accounted murder, any more than the killing of a beast. The master had absolute power of life, or death, or

torture ; and their lives were therefore sacrificed in the most wanton manner. The youth of Sparta made it their pastime frequently to lie in ambush by night for the slaves, and sally out with daggers upon every Helot who came near them, and murder him in cold blood. It was the custom for Vedius Pollio, a Roman, when his slaves had committed a fault, sometimes a very trifling one, to order them to be thrown into his fish-ponds, to feed his lampreys. It was the constant custom, as we learn from Tacitus, when a master was murdered in his own house, to put all the slaves to death indiscriminately.

3. In many heathen nations it was allowed to strangle, or drown, or expose infants, especially if sickly or deformed ; and that which in Christian states is considered as the most atrocious of crimes, was, by the most celebrated of ancient pagan nations, esteemed a wise and political expedient to rid the state of useless or troublesome members, and was even enjoined by some of their most celebrated sages and legislators. The same practice continues to this day in a most affecting extent, not only among uncivilized Pagans, but among the Hindoos and the Chinese.

4. As far as the authority of their moral teachers went, a full scope was given for the indulgence of hatred, malice, and insatiate revenge. One of the qualities of the good man described by Cicero is, that he hurts no one, except he be injured himself ; and he declares as to himself, “ I will revenge all injuries, according as I am provoked by any.” And Aristotle speaks of meekness as a defect, because the meek man will not avenge himself ; and of revenge, as “ a more manly thing.”

5. To those vices which are connected with the pursuit of sinful pleasure, lawgivers, statesmen, philosophers, and moralists gave the sanction of their opinions and their practice ; which foul blot of ancient Heathenism continues, to this day, to mark the morals of pagan countries.

6. In most civilized states, the very existence of society and the natural selfishness of man led to the preservation of the ancient laws against theft and rapine, and to the due

execution of the statutes made against them ; but in this also we see the same disposition to corrupt the original prohibition. It was not extended to strangers, or to foreign countries ; nor was it generally interpreted to reach to any thing more than flagrant acts of violence. Usury, extortion, and fraud were rather regarded as laudable acts than as injurious to character. Throughout India, there is said to be scarcely such a thing as common honesty.

7 Deceit and falsehood have been the character of all pagan nations, and continue so to be to this day. This is the character of the Chinese as given by the best authorities ; and of the Hindoos it is stated, by the most respectable Europeans, not merely by Missionaries, but by those who have long held official, civil, and judicial situations among them, that their disregard of truth is uniform and systematic. When discovered, it causes no surprise in the one party, or humiliation in the other. Even when they have truth to tell, they seldom fail to bolster it up with some appended falsehoods. “ It is the business of all,” says Sir John Shore, “ from the Ryot to the Dewan, to conceal and deceive. The simplest matters of fact are designedly covered with a veil, which no human understanding can penetrate.” The prevalence of perjury is so universal, as to involve the Judges in extreme perplexity.

8. The horrible practice of offering human sacrifices prevailed throughout every region of the heathen world, to a degree which is almost incredible ; and it still prevails in many populous countries where Christianity has not yet been made known. There are incontestable proofs of its having subsisted among the Egyptians, the Syrians, the Persians, the Phenicians, and all the various nations of the east. It was one of the crying sins of the Canaanites. The contagion spread over every part of Asia, Africa, and Europe. The Greeks and Romans, though less involved in this guilt than many other nations, were not altogether untainted with it. On great and extraordinary occasions, they had recourse to what was esteemed the most efficacious and most meritorious sacrifice that could be offered to the gods, the effusion of

human blood. But among more barbarous nations, this practice took a firmer root. The Scythians and Thracians, the Gauls and the Germans, were strongly addicted to it ; and our own island, under the gloomy and ferocious despotism of the Druids, was polluted with the religious murder of its inhabitants. In the semi-civilized kingdoms on the western side of Africa, as Dahomy, Ashantee, and others, many thousands fall every year victims to superstition. In America, Montezuma offered twenty thousand victims yearly to the sun ; and modern navigators have found the practice throughout the whole extent of the vast Pacific Ocean. As for India, the cries of its abominable and cruel superstitions have been sounded repeatedly in the ears of the British public and its Legislature ; and, including infants and widows, not fewer than ten thousand lives fall a sacrifice to idolatry in our own eastern dominions yearly !

9. This immoral tendency of their religion was confirmed and perfected by the very character and actions of their gods, whose names were perpetually in their mouths ; and whose murderous or obscene exploits, whose villanies and chicaneries, whose hatreds and strifes, were the subjects of their popular legends ; which made up, in fact, the only theology, if so it may be called, of the body of the people.

This sad picture of heathen morals and misery must surely convince you, that there was a most pressing necessity for a merciful interposition on the part of God to enlighten this darkness, and to teach men the truth as to himself, and all those great principles on which human happiness and salvation depend.

Y.—I do indeed see the value and necessity of a written and authorized revelation from God ; and now wait for your next step in this important argument.

### CHAPTER III.

*The Evidence by which a Revelation may be satisfactorily proved to be divine.*

TEACHER.—You acknowledge such a revelation from God, as should contain explicit information on the subjects on which mankind had most erred, to have been necessary ; and you very properly expect that a religious system which makes so lofty a claim should be supported by adequate evidence : Let me then ask whether you think it possible for God to reveal truth to man ?

YOUTH.—To deny that would be the greatest absurdity ; for as he made us capable of knowledge, he must be able to communicate knowledge to us in various ways,—by sensible appearances,—by voices,—by angels, or by his secret and invisible illumination of the mind of man ; thus introducing ideas into the understanding which it could not by its own efforts have acquired.

T.—Right ; but now suppose any man to profess that God had thus spoken to him by a voice, or to have sent an angel to him with a message, or to have illuminated his mind in the way just described ; would you admit the teaching and writing of such a man to be of divine authority, on his own declaration only ?

Y.—Certainly not. If he were even a good man, I should still think that he might possibly have been deceived in whole, or in part.

T.—How then would you require him to prove that he had received such a revelation from God ?

Y.—Indeed it is difficult to conceive how any man, though he might truly have received such a communication, could convince any other of it. He might make such a profession with earnestness ; he might appeal to his good character ; he might reason on the doctrine to prove it rational and important ; but none of these could command the entire credence of mankind, or give his doctrine authority.

T.—Your remarks are just ; and therefore if such a revelation were intended to be a public benefit to mankind, and he who has received it was to be considered in the light of a divine messenger, we must suppose that Almighty God would in some way accredit him to others in that character, by enabling him to perform some work evidently above mere human power to effect, and which therefore must appear to be wrought by God himself by his instrumentality, as a sign of his commission.

Y.—This seems to be the only means by which he could obtain credit ; and miracles are therefore, I suppose, urged by believers in the Bible as signs of this description.

T.—They are so ; but that you may fully perceive the force of the argument which we build upon them, I must ask you to tell me what a miracle is.

Y.—A miracle is a wonder, a prodigy, or extraordinary event.

T.—This is a definition of a miracle merely in the popular sense ; but in the sense in which we use the term in theology, we must be more precise in our definition. A miracle is an effect or event contrary to the established constitution or course of things, or a sensible suspension or controlment of, or deviation from, the known laws of nature, wrought either by the immediate act, or by the concurrence, or by the permission of God, for the proof or evidence of some particular doctrine, or in attestation of the authority of some particular person.

Y.—What end does this definition serve ?

T.—It shows you, that we take the fairest ground with unbelievers in this question ;—that we do not think every strange event a miracle ; nor what uninstructed men, from their ignorance of the laws of nature, medicinal power, the power of imagination over the bodily frame, or mechanical skill and contrivances, or the science of chemistry, might consider miraculous ; but acknowledge that event only to be miraculous which manifestly exceeds the extent of human power, as measured by those limits of its exertion which uniform experience has defined, which, as it overrules the established laws of nature, must argue the agency of a divine



control, and which is so connected with the promulgation of a professed revelation as clearly to be designed to authenticate it.

Y.—The question cannot be more fairly stated ; but now I wish to hear the argument you form from the supposed case of the performance of such a miracle.

T.—The argument is, that as the known and established course of nature has been fixed by him who is the Creator and Preserver of all things, it can never be violated, departed from, or controlled, but either immediately by himself, or mediately by other beings at his command, and by his assistance or permission ; for if this be not allowed, we must deny that God governs all things. Every real miracle therefore is a work of God, done by his permission, and with his concurrence.

Y.—But how do you connect such miracles with the authority of the teachers of a professed revelation ?

T.—In the following manner :—

When such unequivocal miracles as those we have pointed out occur only at the time when certain persons profess that they have a divine authority to teach and command mankind, this is a strong presumption, that the works are wrought by God in order to authenticate this pretension ; but when they are performed by those persons themselves, at their own volition, and for the express purpose of establishing their mission, inasmuch as such works are allowed to be real miracles, which no power but that of God can effect, it is then clear that God is with them, and that his co-operation is an authenticating and visible seal upon their commission.

Y.—This is satisfactory ; but it still remains for you to show, that such miracles have been actually wrought by the agents employed by God to communicate to men the revelations of the Scriptures.

T.—This might be done at great length ; but it will be sufficient to examine a few of the miracles of Moses, and of Christ ; for if their divine commission be thus proved, all the rest follows.

Y.—This of course.

T.—Well, then, to begin with Moses :—

1. The rod cast from the hand of Moses became a serpent. Here the subject was well known ; it was a rod, a branch separated from a tree ; and it was obviously contrary to the known and established course of nature, that it should undergo so signal a transformation. If the fact can be proved, the miracle must therefore follow.

2. The plague of darkness. Two circumstances are to be noted in the relation given of this event in Exodus x. It continued three days ; and it afflicted the Egyptians only, for “all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.” The fact here mentioned was of the most public kind ; and had it not taken place, every Egyptian and every Israelite could have contradicted the account. The phenomenon was not produced by an eclipse of the sun, for no eclipse of that luminary can endure so long ; and to what but to a supernatural cause could the distinction made between the Israelites and the Egyptians be attributed, when they inhabited a portion of the same country, and when their neighbourhoods were immediately adjoining ? Here then are the characters of a true miracle. The established course of natural causes and effects is interrupted by an operation upon that mighty element, the atmosphere. That it was not a casual irregularity in nature, is made apparent from the effect following the volition of a man acting in the name of the Lord of nature, and from its being restrained by that to a certain part of the same country.—“Moses stretched out his hand,” and the darkness prevailed every where but in the dwellings of his own people. The fact being allowed, the miracle of necessity follows.

3. The miracle of dividing the waters of the Red Sea. In this event we observe, as in the others, circumstances which exclude all possibility of mistake or collusion. The subject of the miracle is the sea ; the witnesses of it the host of Israel, who passed through on foot, and the Egyptian nation, who lost their King and his whole army. The miraculous characters of the event are,—the waters are divided, and stand up on each side ;—the instrument is a strong east wind, which begins its operation upon the waters, at the stretching out

of the hand of Moses, and ceases at the same signal, and that at the precise moment when the return of the waters would be most fatal to the Egyptian pursuing army. The miraculous character of this event is, therefore, most strongly marked. An expanse of water, and that water a sea of from nine to twelve miles broad, known to be exceedingly subject to agitations, is divided, and a wall of water is formed on each hand, affording a passage on dry land for the Israelites. The phenomenon occurs, too, just as the Egyptian host are on the point of overtaking the fugitives ; and ceases at the moment when the latter reach the opposite shore in safety, and when their enemies are in the midst of the passage, in the only position in which the closing of the wall of waters on each side could ensure the entire destruction of so large a force !

4. The falling of the manna in the wilderness for forty years, is another unquestionable miracle, and one in which there could be neither mistake on the part of those who were sustained by it, nor fraud on the part of Moses. That this event was not produced by the ordinary course of nature, is rendered certain by the fact, that the same wilderness has been travelled by individuals, and by large bodies of men, from the earliest ages to the present, but no such supply of food was ever met with, except on this occasion. And its miraculous character is further marked by the following circumstances :—That it fell but six days in the week : That it fell in such prodigious quantities, as sustained three millions of souls : That there fell a double quantity every Friday, to serve the Israelites for the next day, which was their Sabbath : That what was gathered on the first five days of the week stank and bred worms, if kept above one day ; but that which was gathered on Friday kept sweet for two days : And that it continued falling while the Israelites remained in the wilderness, but ceased as soon as they came out of it, and got corn to eat in the land of Canaan. Let these very extraordinary particulars be considered, and they at once confirm the fact, whilst they unequivocally establish the miracle. No people could be deceived in these circumstances ; no person could persuade them of their truth, if they had not occurred ; and

the whole was so clearly out of the regular course of nature, as to mark unequivocally the interposition of God.

To the majority of the numerous miracles recorded in the Old Testament, the same remarks apply, and upon them the same miraculous characters are as indubitably impressed. If we proceed to those of Christ, the evidence becomes, if possible, more indubitable. They were clearly above the power either of human agency or natural causes. It would be trifling to examine instances so well known in their circumstances; for the slightest recollection of the feeding of the multitudes in the desert,—the healing of the paralytic,—the instant cure of the withered hand in the synagogue, near Jerusalem,—the raising from the dead the daughter of Jairus, the widow's son, and Lazarus,—and many other instances of miraculous power,—will be sufficient to convince any ingenuous mind, that all the characters of real miracles meet in them. That great miracle, the resurrection of our Lord himself from the dead, so often appealed to by the first teachers of his religion, crowns the whole.

Y.—I now most clearly perceive, that if these facts can be established to have actually taken place, they must be allowed to have been wrought by a divine power; and, by the circumstances of their performance or occurrence, to attest both Moses and Christ as commissioned by the Author of nature himself. But is not evidence from prophecy also relied on, in proof of the divine authority of the Scriptures?

T.—It is; and with reason.

Y.—But tell me what you understand by prophecy.

T.—Your question is important; for we do not understand by prophecy an ingenious anticipation of future events, which may sometimes be realized; nor dark and equivocal general predictions, which may often have a plausible application to different events; nor the wise conjectures of observant men, founded upon experience. We here, as in the case of miracles, take open ground with our opponents, and appeal to prophecy only as it bears the following characters:—1. That it shall have been delivered before the event said to be a fulfilment of it; 2. That it shall have a particular, and not a

general, agreement with that event ; 3. That the event shall be such as no human sagacity or foresight could possibly conjecture and foretel ; and, 4. That these predictions shall be connected with those who profess to give revelations from God to mankind, in the same manner as in the case of miracles.

Y.—This brings the matter to an easy issue : But in what way is the fulfilment of prophecy a proof of a divine commission in him who utters it ?

T.—In the following :—

When, for instance, the events are distant many years or ages from the uttering of the prediction itself, depending on causes not so much as existing when the prophecy was spoken and recorded, and likewise upon various circumstances and a long arbitrary series of things, and the fluctuating uncertainties of human volitions ; and especially when they depend not at all upon any external circumstances, nor upon any created being, but arise merely from the counsels and appointment of God himself ;—such events can be foreknown only by that Being, one of whose attributes is omniscience, and can be foretold by him only to whom the “ Father of lights ” shall reveal them ; so that whoever is manifestly endued with that predictive power, must, in that instance, speak and act by divine inspiration, and what he pronounces of that kind must be received as the word of God ; nothing more being necessary to assure us of this, than credible testimony that such predictions were uttered before the event, and conclusive evidence that the records which contain them are of the antiquity to which they pretend.

Y.—Can you give any instances of this kind of prophecy, and its fulfilment ?

T.—The instances which the Scriptures supply are very numerous ; but a few will convince you of the irresistible force of their claim to divine inspiration.

1. We take, first, the celebrated prediction of Jacob before his death : “ The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come,” &c.

The word “ Shiloh ” signifies, “ He who is to be sent,” or “ the Peace-maker : ” In either sense, the application of it

to that great Person to whom all the patriarchs looked forward, and all the Prophets gave witness, is obvious. Before a certain event, a certain person was to come, to whom the people should be gathered : The event has certainly arrived, but who is the person ? The application of the prophecy to Messiah is not an invention of Christians. The ancient Jews, as appears from their commentators, so understood it ; and the modern ones are unable to refute the evidence drawn from it, in favour of the claims of our Lord. That it is a prediction is proved from its form, and the circumstances under which it was delivered ; that it has received a singular accomplishment in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, is also certain ; and it is equally certain, that no individual beside can be produced, in whom it has been in any sense whatever accomplished. Judah, as a tribe, remained till after the advent of Jesus Christ ; which cannot be said of the long-dispersed ten tribes, and scarcely of Benjamin, which was merged in the tribe of Judah. Till our Lord came, and had accomplished his work on earth, the tribe of Judah continued. This is matter of unquestionable historic fact. In a short time afterwards it was dispersed, and mingled with the common mass of Jews of all tribes and countries : This is equally unquestionable. Now again we ask, could either human foresight determine this, or is the application of the event to the prophecy fanciful ? The prediction was uttered in the very infancy of the state of Israel, by the father of the fathers of the tribes of that people. Ages passed away ; the mightiest empires were annihilated ; ten of the chosen tribes themselves were utterly dispersed into unknown countries ; another became so insignificant as to lose its designation ; one only remained, which imposed its very name upon the nation at large, the object of public observation until the Messiah came, and that tribe was Judah, the tribe spoken of in the prediction, and it remained as it were only to make the fulfilment manifest, and was then confounded with the relics of the rest. What prescience of countless contingencies, occurring in the intervening ages, does this imply !—a prescience truly which can only belong to God.

2. The apostasies and idolatries of his people were foretold

by Moses before his death. "I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you, and evil will befall you in the latter days;" (Deut. xxxi. 29;) and he accordingly prophetically declares their punishment.

Let us look into the detail of these threatened punishments. Beside the ordinary inflictions of failing harvests, and severe diseases, in their own country, they were, according to the prophecies of Moses, (Deut. xxviii.,) to be "scattered among all people, from the one end of the earth even to the other." And where is the trading nation in which they are not, in Asia, Africa, and Europe? Many are even to be found in the West Indies, and in the commercial parts of America. Who could foresee this but God; especially when their singular preservation as a distinct people, a solitary instance in the history of nations, is also implied? They were to find "no ease" among these nations; and the almost constant and long-continued persecutions, robberies, and murder of Jews, not only in ancient nations, but especially among Christian nations of the middle ages, and in the Mahometan states to this day, are in wonderful accomplishment of this. They were to be "a proverb and a by-word among all nations," which has been in every place fulfilled, but was surely above human intelligence to foresee. It was added, "The stranger that is within thee shall get above thee very high, and thou shalt come very low." For a comment on this, let the conduct of the "stranger," the Turk and others, who inhabit Palestine, towards the Jews who remained there, be recollected:—The one party is indeed "very high," and the other "very low." Other parts of this singular chapter present equally striking predictions, uttered more than three thousand years ago, and since remarkably accomplished; but there are some passages in it, which refer in terms so particular to a then distant event,—the utter subversion of their polity and nation by the Romans,—as to demonstrate in the most unequivocal manner the prescience of Him to whom all events, the most contingent, minute, and distant, are known with absolute certainty. That the Romans are intended, in verse 49, by the nation brought from "the end

of the earth," distinguished by their well-known ensign "the eagle," and by their fierce and cruel disposition, is exceedingly probable ; and it is remarkable, that the account which Moses gives of the horrors of the "siege" of which he speaks, is exactly paralleled by those well-known passages in Josephus, in which he describes the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman army. The last verse of the chapter seems indeed to fix the reference of the foregoing passages to the final destruction of the nation by the Romans, and at the same time contains a prediction, the accomplishment of which cannot possibly be ascribed to accident. "And the Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again : And there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you." On this Dr. Hales remarks, on the authority of their own national historian, Josephus, "Of the captives taken at the siege of Jerusalem, above seventeen years of age, some were sent to Egypt in chains ; the greater part were distributed through the provinces to be destroyed in the theatres, by the sword, and by wild beasts ; the rest under seventeen were sold for slaves, and that for a trifling sum, on account of the numbers to be sold, and the scarcity of buyers ; so that at length the prophecy of Moses was fulfilled,—'and no man shall buy.' The part that were reserved to grace the triumph of Vespasian were probably transported to Italy in 'ships,' or by sea, to avoid a prodigious land journey thither through Asia and Greece,—a circumstance which distinguished this invasion and captivity from the preceding by the Assyrians and Babylonians. In the ensuing rebellion, a part of the captives 'were sent by sea to Egypt,' and several of the ships were wrecked on the coast."

Thus, at a distance of fifteen centuries were these contingent circumstances accurately recorded by the prophetic spirit of Moses,—the taking of innumerable Jews captive,—their transport to Egypt, — their being sold till the markets for slaves were glutted, and no more buyers were found,—and embarked on board vessels, either to grace the triumph of their conqueror, or to find a market in different maritime



ports. Is it possible that these numerous and minute circumstances can be referred to either happy conjectures or human foresight?

3. The destruction of many ancient cities was foretold by the Prophets, and has been strikingly verified. As to Babylon, even when it was the most potent city of the world, and the head of the most formidable empire, Isaiah predicts its capture by Cyrus, (mentioning him by name more than one hundred years before he was born,) and its utter destruction. Now the proof of the truth of this prophecy remains to this day. In Bishop Newton's "Dissertations on the Prophecies," which I recommend to your perusal, you will find this part of prophetic Scripture strikingly illustrated. And still further proofs of the wonderfully exact accomplishment of those prophecies may be seen in a highly interesting "Memoir on the Ruins of Babylon," by Claudius J. Rich, published in 1815. Immense ruins were visited by him near the supposed site of ancient Babylon, which probably are, though the matter cannot be certainly ascertained, the remains of that astonishing city, now indeed "swept with the besom of destruction." He tells us too, that the neighbourhood is to the present a habitation only for birds and beasts of prey; that the dens of lions, with their slaughtered victims, are to be seen in many places; and that most of the cavities are occupied with bats and owls. It is therefore impossible to reflect without awe upon the passage of Isaiah, written during the prosperity of Babylon, wherein he says, "The wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there." The present ruins of that city also demonstrate, that the course of the Euphrates has been changed, probably in consequence of the channel formed by Cyrus; and the yielding nature of the soil demonstrates that such an operation could have been performed by a large army with great facility and despatch.

The ruins examined by Mr. Rich bear testimony to the immense extent of the city as described by ancient authors. Vast masses of masonry, of both burnt and unburnt bricks and bitumen, were observed in various excavations in these huge

mountains of ruins, which are separated from each other by several miles. One is called by the Arabs "Birs Nimroud;" another the "Kasr," or palace; and a third, which some have thought to be the ruins of the Tower of Belus, is called by the natives "Mugelibe," Overturned, which expressive term is also sometimes applied to the mounds of the Kasr.

4. Daniel distinctly predicts the overthrow, in succession, of the four great empires of antiquity,—the Babylonian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman, all which has taken place; but neither the rise of the three latter, nor their fall, could have been foreseen by man.

5. But the most numerous prophecies relate to Messiah, the great end and object of the prophetic dispensation. Of these not a solitary instance, or two, of an equivocal kind, and expressed only in figurative or symbolic language, are to be adduced; but upwards of one hundred predictions, generally of very clear and explicit meaning, and each referring to some different circumstance connected with the appearing of Christ, his person, history, and his ministry, have been selected by Divines;—exclusive of typical and allusive predictions, and those which in an ultimate and remote sense are believed to terminate in him. The history of Jesus answers to these predictions, and exhibits their exact accomplishment. The Messiah was to be of the seed of David,—born in Bethlehem,—born of a virgin,—an incarnation of Deity, "God with us,"—an eminent but unsuccessful teacher;—he was to open the eyes of the blind, heal the lame and sick, and raise the dead;—he was to be despised and rejected by his own countrymen, arraigned on false charges, denied justice, and condemned to a violent death;—he was to rise from the dead, ascend to the right hand of God, and there being invested with power and authority, he was to punish his enemies, and establish his own spiritual kingdom, which shall never end. We do not enter into more minute predictions, for the argument is irresistible when founded on these alone; and we may assert that no man, or number of men, could possibly have made such conjectures. Considered in themselves, this is impossible. What rational man, or number of rational

men, could now be found to hazard a conjecture that an incarnation of Deity would occur in any given place and time,—that this divine Person should teach wisdom, work miracles, be unjustly put to death, rise again, and establish his religion? These are thoughts which never enter into the minds of men, because they are suggested by no experience, and by no probability arising out of the usual course of human affairs: And yet if the Prophets were not inspired, it would have been as impossible for them to have conceived such expectations, as for us; and indeed much more so, seeing we are now familiar with a religion which asserts that such events have once occurred. If then such events lay beyond not only human foresight, but even human thought, they can only be referred to inspiration. But the case does not close here. How shall we account, in the next place, for these circumstances all having met, strange as they are, in one person, and in one only among all the millions of men who have been born of woman,—and that person Jesus of Nazareth? He was of the house and lineage of David,—he was born, and that by a singular event, in Bethlehem,—he professed to be “God with us,” and wrought miracles to substantiate his claim. At his word or touch the “eyes of the blind were opened,” “the lame leaped as a hart,” the dumb spake, the sick were healed, and the dead lived, as the Prophets had foretold. Of the wisdom of his teaching, his recorded discourses bear witness. His rejection and unjust death by his countrymen are matters of historic fact; his resurrection and ascension stand upon the lofty evidences which have been already adduced; the destruction of the Jewish nation, according to his own predictions, followed as the proof of the terror of his offended majesty; and his “kingdom” among men continues to this day. There is no possible means of evading the evidence of the fulfilment of these predictions in the person of our Lord.

To all these predictions the words of a modern writer are applicable: “Let now the infidel, or the sceptical reader, meditate thoroughly and soberly upon these predictions. The priority of the records to the events admits of no question. The completion is obvious to every competent inquirer.

Here then are facts. We are called upon to account for those facts on rational and adequate principles. Is human foresight equal to the task? enthusiasm? conjecture? chance? political contrivance? If none of these, neither any other principle that may be devised by man's sagacity, can account for the facts; then true philosophy, as well as true religion, will ascribe them to the inspiration of the Almighty. Every effect must have a cause."

Y.—This is evidence not to be controverted; but how shall I know that these miraculous works did in reality take place, and that these prophecies were uttered and recorded before the events which they foretel?

T.—This is the third step in our demonstration; and on this subject you shall receive satisfactory information.

## CHAPTER IV.

### *The Antiquity, Genuineness, and Authenticity of the Books of Scripture.*

YOUTH.—At what period did Moses become the legislator of the Jewish nation, and Christ appear in the world ?

TEACHER.—Moses gave his laws about 1600 years before Christ, according to the common chronology, which fixes the birth of our Lord upwards of eighteen centuries ago.

Y.—Is there any testimony of ancient pagan writers, as to the existence and antiquity of these distinguished persons ?

T.—Yes ; for though some infidel writers have carried their folly so far as to question their existence, we have the testimony of numerous pagan writers, as well as uninterrupted tradition, to confirm it.

Y.—Have the kindness to give me some instances.

T.—To the existence of the founders of the Jewish and Christian religion, and the respective antiquity ascribed to them in the Scriptures, many ancient writers give ample testimony ; who, being themselves neither of the Jewish nor Christian religion, cannot be suspected of having had any design to furnish evidence of the truth of either. Manetho, Cheræmon, Apollonius, and Lysimachus, besides some other ancient Egyptians whose histories are now lost, are quoted by Josephus, as extant in his days ; and passages are collected from them, in which they agree that Moses was the leader of the Jews when they departed from Egypt, and the founder of their laws. Strabo, who flourished in the century before Christ, gives an account of the law of Moses as forbidding images, and limiting divine worship to one invisible and universal Being. Justin, a Roman historian, in his 36th book, devotes a chapter to an account of the origin of the Jews ; represents them as sprung from ten sons of Israel, and speaks of Moses as the commander of the Jews who went out of Egypt, of the institution of the Sabbath, and the priesthood

of Aaron. Pliny speaks of Moses, as giving rise to a sect of magicians, probably with reference to his contest with the magicians of Egypt. Tacitus says, “Moses gave a new form of worship to the Jews, and a system of religious ceremonies, the reverse of every thing known to any other age or country.” Juvenal, in his 14th satire, mentions Moses as the author of a volume, which was preserved with great care among the Jews, by which the worship of images and eating swine’s flesh were forbidden; and circumcision and the observation of the Sabbath strictly enjoined. Longinus cites Moses as the law-giver of the Jews, and praises the sublimity of his style in the account he gives of the creation. As to Christ, it is only necessary to give the testimony of two historians, whose antiquity no one ever thought of disputing. Suetonius mentions him by name, and says, that Claudius expelled from Rome those who adhered to his cause. Tacitus records the progress which the Christian religion had made, and the violent death its Founder had suffered; that he flourished under the reign of Tiberius; that Pilate was then Procurator of Judea; and that the original author of this profession was Christ. Thus not only the real existence of the Founder of Christianity, but the period in which he lived is exactly ascertained by writings, the genuineness of which has never been doubted.

Y.—Proceed now to show me on what ground I am to admit the professed antiquity of the sacred Scriptures, which appears also to be an important point.

T.—It is; for if the writings in question were composed at, or very near, the time in which the miraculous acts recorded in them were performed, then the evidence of those events having occurred is rendered the stronger; for, in that case, they were written at the time when many were living who might have contradicted the narration, if false; and the improbability is also greater, that, in the very age and place when and where those events are said to have been performed, any writer would have dared to run the hazard of prompt, certain, and disgraceful detection. It is equally important in the evidence from prophecy; for if the predictions were recorded

long before the events which accomplished them took place, then the only question which remains is, whether the accomplishment actually occurred ; for then the evidence becomes irresistible.

Y.—I perceive the importance of this inquiry : what then can be adduced ?

T.—With respect to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, the language in which they are written is a strong proof of their antiquity. The Hebrew ceased to be spoken as a living language soon after the Babylonish captivity, and the learned agree that there was no grammar made for the Hebrew till many ages after. The difficulty of a forgery at any period after the time of that captivity is therefore apparent. Of these books too there was a Greek translation, commonly called the Septuagint, made about two hundred and eighty-seven years before the Christian era, and laid up in the Alexandrian library.

Josephus gives a catalogue of the sacred books among the Jews, in which he expressly mentions the five books of Moses, thirteen of the Prophets, four of Hymns and Moral Precepts ; and if, as many critics maintain, Ruth was added to Judges, and the Lamentations of Jeremiah to his Prophecies, the number agrees with those of the Old Testament as it is received at the present day.

The Samaritans, who separated from the Jews many hundred years before the birth of Christ, have in their language a Pentateuch, in the main exactly agreeing with the Hebrew ; and the pagan writers before cited, with many others, speak of Moses not only as a lawgiver and a Prince, but as the author of books esteemed sacred by the Jews.

Y.—If the writings of Moses, then, are not genuine, the forgery must have taken place at a very early period.

T.—Yes ; but a few considerations will convince you, that at any time this was utterly impossible.

Y.—This I shall be happy to see made plain.

T.—It is done to my hand by the argument of a celebrated writer,\* which I shall abridge, referring you to his work for the proof at large.

\* Leslie's Short and Easy Method with the Deists.

“ It is impossible that those books should have been received as his, if not written by him, because they speak of themselves as delivered by Moses, and kept in the ark from his time. (Deut. xxxi. 24—26.) A copy of this book was also to be left with the King. (Deut. xvii. 18.)

“ This book of the law thus speaks of itself, not only as a history or relation of what things were done, but as the standing and municipal law and statutes of the nation of the Jews, binding the King as well as the people. Now in whatever age after Moses this book may be supposed to have been forged, it was impossible that it could be received as truth, because it was not then to be found (as it professed to be) either in the ark, or with the King, or any where else ; for when first invented, every body must know that they had never heard of it before.

“ Could any man, now at this day, invent a book of statutes or Acts of Parliament for England, and make it pass upon the nation as the only book of statutes that ever they had known ? As impossible was it for the books of Moses (if they were invented in any age after Moses) to have been received for what they declare themselves to be, namely, the statutes and municipal law of the nation of the Jews ; and for any to have persuaded the Jews, that they had owned and acknowledged these books all along, from the days of Moses to that day in which they were first invented ; that is, that they had owned them before they had ever so much as heard of them. Nay, more, the whole nation must, in an instant, forget their former laws and government, if they could receive these books as being their former laws. And they could not otherwise receive them, because they vouched themselves so to be. Let me ask the Deists but one short question : Was there ever a book of sham laws, which were not the laws of the nation, palmed upon any people, since the world began ? If not, with what face can they say this of the book of laws of the Jews ? Why will they say that of them, which they confess impossible in any nation, or among any people ?

“ But they must be yet more unreasonable. For the books of Moses have a further demonstration of their truth than



even other law books have ; for they not only contain the laws, but give an historical account of their institution, and the practice of them from that time ;—as of the passover, in memory of the death of the first-born in Egypt ; (Num. viii. 17, 18 ;) and that the same day, all the first-born of Israel, both of man and beast, were, by a perpetual law, dedicated to God ; and the Levites taken for all the first-born of the children of Israel. And besides these remembrances of particular actions and occurrences, there were other solemn institutions in memory of their deliverance out of Egypt, in the general, which included all the particulars ;—as the Sabbath ; their daily sacrifices and yearly expiation ; their new moons, and several feasts and fasts. So that there were yearly, monthly, weekly, daily remembrances and recognitions of these things.

“ Now whenever it can be supposed that these books of Moses were forged in some ages after Moses, it is impossible they could have been received as true, unless the forgers could have made the whole nation believe, that they had received these books from their fathers, had been instructed in them when they were children, and had taught them to their children ; moreover, that they had all been circumcised, and did circumcise their children, in pursuance to what was commanded in these books ; that they had observed the yearly passover, the weekly Sabbath, the new moons, and all the several feasts, fasts, and ceremonies commanded in these books. But was it possible to have persuaded a whole nation of men, that they had known and practised all these things, if they had not done it ? or, secondly, to have received a book for truth, which said they had practised them, and appealed to that practice ?

“ But now let us descend to the utmost degree of supposition, namely, that these things were practised before these books of Moses were forged ; and that those books did only impose upon the nation, in making them believe, that they had kept these observances in memory of such and such things, as were inserted in those books.

“ Well then, let us proceed upon this supposition, (how-

ever groundless,) and now, will not the same impossibilities occur as in the former case? For, first, this must suppose that the Jews kept all these observances in memory of nothing, or without knowing any thing of their original, or the reason why they kept them. Whereas these very observances did express the ground and reason of their being kept; as the Passover, in memory of God's passing over the children of the Israelites, in that night wherein he slew all the first-born of Egypt; and so of the rest.

"But, secondly, let us suppose, contrary both to reason and matter of fact, that the Jews did not know any reason at all why they kept these observances; yet was it possible to persuade them that they had kept these observances in memory of what they had never heard of before that day, whensoever you will suppose that these books of Moses were first forged? For example, suppose I should now forge some romantic story, of strange things done a thousand years ago; and, in confirmation of this, should endeavour to persuade the Christian world that they had all along, from that day to this, kept the first day of the week in memory of such a hero, an Apollonius, a Barcosbas, or a Mahomet; and had all been baptized in his name; and swore by his name, and upon that very book, (which I had then forged, and which they never saw before,) in their public judicatures; that this book was their Gospel and law, which they had ever since that time, these thousand years past, universally received and owned, and none other. I would ask any Deist, whether he thinks it possible that such a cheat could pass, or such a legend be received, as the Gospel of Christians; and that they could be made to believe that they had never had any other Gospel?

"Let me give one very familiar example more in this case. There is the Stonehenge in Salisbury Plain, every body knows it; and yet none knows the reason why those great stones were set there, or by whom, or in memory of what.

"Now, suppose I should write a book to-morrow, and tell them, that these stones were set up by Hercules, Polyphemus, or Garagantua, in memory of such and such of their actions; and, for a further confirmation of this, should say in this book,

that it was wrote at the time when such actions were done, and by the very actors themselves, or eye-witnesses ; and that this book had been received as truth, and quoted by authors of the greatest reputation, in all ages since ;—moreover, that this book was well known in England, and enjoined by Act of Parliament to be taught our children ; and that we did teach it to our children, and had been taught it ourselves when we were children. I ask any Deist, whether he thinks this could pass upon England ? and whether if I, or any other, should insist upon it, we should not, instead of being believed, be sent to Bedlam ?”

This able reasoning has never been refuted, nor can be ; and if the books of the law must have been written by Moses, it is as easy to prove, that Moses himself could not in the nature of the thing have deceived the people by an imposture, and a pretence of miraculous attestations, in order, like some later lawgivers among the Heathens, to bring the people more willingly to submit to his institutions. The kind of miracles he gives as instances rendered this impossible. “ Suppose,” says the same writer, “ any man should pretend, that yesterday he divided the Thames, in presence of all the people of London, and carried the whole city, men, women, and children, over to Southwark on dry land, the water standing like walls on both sides : I say, it is morally impossible that he could persuade the people of London that this was true, when every man, woman, and child could contradict him, and say, that this was a notorious falsehood, for that they had not seen the Thames so divided, nor had they gone over on dry land.

“ As to Moses, I suppose it will be allowed me, that he could not have persuaded six hundred thousand men, that he had brought them out of Egypt through the Red Sea, fed them forty years, without bread, by miraculous manna, and the other matters of fact recorded in his books, if they had not been true ; because every man’s senses then alive must have contradicted it. And therefore he must have imposed upon all their senses, if he could have made them believe it, when it was false, and if no such things were done.”

By these arguments, the genuineness and authenticity of the books of Moses are established; and as to those of the Prophets, which, with some predictions in the writings of Moses, comprise the prophetic branch of the evidence of the divine authority of the revelations they contain, it can be proved both from Jewish tradition, the list of Josephus, the Greek translation, and from their being quoted by ancient writers, that they existed many ages before several of those events occurred.

The same author, from whom we have already quoted,\* applies his celebrated four rules, for determining the truth of matters of fact in general, with equal force to the facts of the Gospel history as to those contained in the Mosaic writings. The rules are, "1. That the matter of fact be such, as that men's outward senses, their eyes and ears, may be judges of it. 2. That it be done publicly in the face of the world. 3. That not only public monuments be kept up in memory of it, but some outward actions be performed. 4. That such monuments, and such actions and observances be instituted, and do commence from the time that the matter of fact was done."

We have seen the manner in which these rules are applied to the books of Moses. The author thus applies them to the Gospel :

"I come now to show, that as in the matters of fact of Moses, so likewise all these four marks do meet in the matters of fact which are recorded in the Gospel of our blessed Saviour. And my work herein will be the shorter, because all that is said before of Moses and his books is every way as applicable to Christ and his Gospel. His works and his miracles are there said to be done publicly in the face of the world; as he argued with his accusers, 'I spake openly to the world, and in secret have I said nothing.' (John xviii. 20.) It is told (Acts ii. 41) that three thousand at one time, and (Acts iv. 4) that above five thousand at another time, were converted, upon conviction of what themselves had seen, what had been done publicly before their eyes, wherein it was impossible to have imposed upon them. Therefore here were the two first rules before-mentioned.

\* Leslie.

“Then for the two second : Baptism and the Lord’s supper were instituted as perpetual memorials of these things ; and they were not instituted in after-ages, but at the very time when these things were said to be done ; and have been observed without interruption, in all ages throughout the whole Christian world, down all the way from that time to this. And Christ himself did ordain Apostles and other Ministers of his Gospel, to preach and administer the sacraments, and to govern his church ; and that always, even unto the end of the world. (Matt. xxviii. 20.) Accordingly, they have continued by regular succession to this day ; and, no doubt, ever shall, while the earth shall last. So that the Christian Clergy are as notorious a matter of fact, as the tribe of Levi among the Jews. And the Gospel is as much a law to the Christians, as the book of Moses to the Jews. And it being part of the matters of fact related in the Gospel, that such an order of men were appointed by Christ, and to continue to the end of the world ; consequently, if the Gospel was a fiction, and invented (as it must be) in some ages after Christ ; then, at that time when it was first invented, there could be no such order of Clergy as derived themselves from the institution of Christ ; which must give the lie to the Gospel, and demonstrate the whole to be false. And the matters of fact of Christ being pressed to be true, no otherwise than as there was at that time (whenever the Deists will suppose the Gospel to be forged) not only public sacraments of Christ’s institution, but an order of Clergy, likewise of his appointment, to administer them ; and it being impossible there could be any such things before they were invented, it is as impossible that they should be received when invented. And therefore, by what was said above, it was as impossible to have imposed upon mankind in this matter, by inventing of it in after-ages, as at the time when those things were said to be done.”

Y.—This is indeed very convincing ; and on this point I am satisfied, that neither the writings of Moses, nor those of the Evangelists, could have been forged, and yet be received as true in any age.

T.—Yet other proofs may be brought from the testimonies

of adversaries and Heathens, to the truth of the history of the Evangelists.

Y.—I will thank you to point them out.

T.—No public contradiction of this history was ever put forth by the Jewish Rulers to stop the progress of a hated religion, though they had every motive to contradict it. This silence is not unimportant evidence ; but the direct testimonies to the facts are numerous and important.

We have already quoted the testimonies of Tacitus and Suetonius to the existence of Jesus Christ, the Founder of the Christian religion, and to his crucifixion in the reign of Tiberius and during the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate, the time in which the Evangelists place that event. Other references to heathen authors, who incidentally allude to Christ, his religion, and followers, might be given ; such as Martial, Juvenal, Epictetus, Trajan, the younger Pliny, Adrian, Apuleius, Lucian of Samosata, &c. ; some of whom also afford testimony to the destruction of Jerusalem, at the time and in the circumstances predicted by our Saviour, and to the antiquity and genuineness of the books of the New Testament. But, as it is well observed by the learned Lardner, in his “ Collection of Jewish and Heathen Testimonies,” “ among all the testimonies to Christianity which we have met with in the first ages, none are more valuable and important than the testimonies of those learned philosophers who wrote against us, Celsus in the second century, Porphyry and Hierocles in the third, and Julian in the fourth.”

Celsus wrote against Christianity not much above one hundred and thirty years after our Lord's ascension, and his books were answered by the celebrated Origen. He was a most bitter enemy of Christianity, and produces many passages out of the Gospels. He represents Jesus to have lived a few years before. He mentions his being born of a virgin ; the angel's appearing to Joseph ; the star that appeared at his birth ; the wise men that came to worship him when an infant ; Herod's massacre of the children ; Joseph's fleeing with the child into Egypt by the admonition of an angel ; the Holy Ghost's descending on Jesus like a dove, when he was baptized by John ; and the

voice from heaven declaring him to be the Son of God ; his going about with his disciples ; his healing the sick and lame, and raising the dead ; his foretelling his own sufferings and resurrection ; his being betrayed and forsaken by his own disciples ; his suffering both of his own accord and in obedience to his heavenly Father ; his grief and trouble, and his praying, " Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me ;" the ignominious treatment he met with, the robe that was put upon him, the crown of thorns, the reed put into his hand, his drinking vinegar and gall, and his being scourged and crucified ; his being seen after his resurrection by a fanatical woman, (as he calls her, meaning Mary Magdalen,) and by his own companions and disciples ; and his showing them his hands that were pierced, the marks of his punishment. He also mentions the angels being seen at his sepulchre.

It is true he mentions all these things only with a design to ridicule and expose them. But they furnish us with an uncontested proof, that the Gospel was then extant. Accordingly, he expressly tells the Christians, " These things we have produced out of your own writings."

Porphyry flourished about the year 270, a man of great abilities ; and his work against the Christians, in fifteen books, was long esteemed by the Gentiles, and thought worthy of being answered by Eusebius, and others in great repute for learning. He was well acquainted with the books of the Old and New Testaments ; and in his writings are plain references to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, John, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistle to the Galatians, and probable references to the other Epistles of St. Paul.

About the year 303 Hierocles, a man of learning and a Magistrate, wrote against the Christians in two books. He was well acquainted with our Scriptures, and made many objections to them, thereby bearing testimony to their antiquity, and to the great respect which was shown them by the Christians ; for he has referred both to the Gospels and to the Epistles. He mentions Peter and Paul by name, and did not deny the truth of our Saviour's miracles ; but, in order to overthrow the argument which the Christians built upon

them, he set up the reputed miracles of Apollonius Tyanæus to rival them.

The Emperor Julian, who succeeded Constantius in the year 361, wrote also against the Christians, and in his work has undesignedly borne a valuable testimony to the history and books of the New Testament. He allows that Jesus was born in the reign of Augustus, at the time of a taxing made in Judea by Cyrenius; and that the Christian religion had its rise, and began to be propagated, in the times of the Roman Emperors Tiberius and Claudius. He bears witness to the genuineness and authenticity of the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and the Acts of the Apostles. And he so quotes them as to intimate, that these were the only historical books received by Christians, as of authority; and the only authentic memoirs of Jesus Christ, and his Apostles, and the doctrines preached by them. He allows the early date of the Gospels, and even argues for them. He quotes, or plainly refers to, the Acts of the Apostles, as already said; and to St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans, to the Corinthians, and to the Galatians. He does not deny the miracles of Jesus Christ, but allows him to have healed the blind, and the lame, and the demoniacs, and to have rebuked the winds, and to have walked upon the waves of the sea. He endeavours, indeed, to diminish those works, but in vain. He endeavours also to lessen the number of the early believers in Jesus, but acknowledges, that there were multitudes of such men in Greece and Italy, before St. John wrote his Gospel. And he often speaks with great indignation of Peter and Paul, those two great Apostles of Jesus, and successful Preachers of his Gospel; so that, upon the whole, he has undesignedly borne witness to the truth of many things recorded in the books of the New Testament. He aimed to overthrow the Christian religion, but has confirmed it.

These testimonies "prove that neither Celsus in the second, Porphyry in the third, nor Julian in the fourth century, suspected the authenticity of these books, or even insinuated that Christians were mistaken in the authors to whom they ascribed them. Not one of them expressed an opinion upon



this subject different from that which is holden by Christians. And when we consider how much it would have availed them to cast a doubt upon this point, if they could, and how ready they showed themselves to take every advantage in their power, and that they were men of learning and inquiry, their concession, or rather their suffrage, upon the subject is extremely valuable."

That the facts and statements recorded in the Evangelic history were not forgeries of a subsequent period, is made also still more indubitable from the fact, that the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles are quoted or alluded to by a series of Christians, beginning with those who were contemporary with the Apostles, or who immediately followed, and proceeding in close and regular succession from their time to the present. "The medium of proof stated in this proposition," observes Dr. Paley, "is of all others the most unquestionable, and is not diminished by the lapse of ages. Bishop Burnet, in the History of his Own Times, inserts various extracts from Lord Clarendon's History. One such insertion is a proof that Lord Clarendon's History was extant when Bishop Burnet wrote, that it had been read and received by him as a work of Lord Clarendon's, and regarded by him as an authentic account of the transactions which it relates; and it will be a proof of these points a thousand years hence. The application of this argument to the Gospel history is obvious. If the different books which are received by Christians as containing this history, are quoted by a series of writers, as genuine in respect of their authors, and as authentic in respect of their narrative, up to the age in which the writers of them lived, then it is clear that these books must have had an existence previous to the earliest of those writings in which they are quoted, and that they were then admitted as authentic."

**Y.**—These testimonies are very satisfactory; but how shall I know that the books now included in the Bible are all sacred, and that those mentioned in the above testimonies have not been altered and corrupted?

**T.**—With respect to the Scriptures of the Old Testament;

the list of Josephus, the Septuagint translation, and the Samaritan Pentateuch, are sufficient proofs that the books which are received by us as sacred are the same as those received by the Jews and Samaritans long before the Christian era. For the New Testament ; beside the quotations from almost all the books now included in that volume, and references to them by name, in the earliest Christian writers, catalogues of authentic scriptures were published at very early periods, which, says Dr. Paley, " though numerous, and made in countries at a wide distance from one another, differ very little, differ in nothing material, and all contain the four Gospels."

Y.—But what say you as to their uncorrupted preservation ?

T.—As to the books of the Old Testament, the regard which was paid to them by the Jews, especially to the law, would render any forgery or material change in their contents impossible. Further, at certain stated seasons, the law was publicly read before all the people of Israel ; and it was appointed to be kept in the ark, for a constant memorial against those who transgressed it. Further, after the people were divided into two kingdoms, both the people of Israel and those of Judah still retained the same book of the law ; and the rivalry or enmity that subsisted between the two kingdoms prevented either of them from altering or adding to the law. After the Israelites were carried captive into Assyria, other nations were placed in the cities of Samaria in their stead ; and the Samaritans received the Pentateuch, as well as the Jews, but with this difference, that the Samaritan Pentateuch was in the old Hebrew or Phenician characters, in which it remains to this day ; whereas the Jewish copy was changed into Chaldee characters, (in which it also remains to this day,) which were fairer and clearer than the Hebrew, the Jews having learned the Chaldee language during their seventy years' abode at Babylon. The jealousy and hatred which subsisted between the Jews and Samaritans made it impracticable for either nation to corrupt or alter the text in any thing of consequence without certain discovery ; and the general agreement between the Hebrew and Samaritan copies of the Pentateuch, which are now extant, is such, as plainly

demonstrates that the copies from which each was taken were originally the same. Nor can any better evidence be desired, that the Jewish Bibles have not been corrupted or interpolated, than this very book of the Samaritans ; which, after more than two thousand years' discord between the two nations, varies as little from the other as any classic work in a less tract of time has disagreed from itself by the unavoidable slips and mistakes of so many transcribers.

After the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, the book of the law and the Prophets was publicly read in their synagogues every Sabbath-day ; which was an excellent method of securing its purity, as well as of enforcing the observation of the law.

After the birth of Christ, the Old Testament was held in high esteem both by Jews and Christians. The Jews also frequently suffered martyrdom for their Scriptures, which they would not have done, had they suspected them to have been corrupted or altered. Besides, the Jews and Christians were a mutual guard upon each other, which must have rendered any material corruption impossible, if it had been attempted ; for if such an attempt had been made by the Jews, they would have been detected by the Christians.

Lastly, the agreement of all the manuscripts of the Old Testament (amounting to nearly eleven hundred and fifty) which are known to be extant is a clear proof of its uncorrupted preservation. These manuscripts, indeed, are not all entire ; some contain one part, and some another. But it is absolutely impossible that every manuscript, whether in the original Hebrew, or in any ancient version or paraphrase, should or could be designedly altered or falsified in the same passages without detection either by Jews or Christians. Although the various readings which have been discovered by learned men, who have applied themselves to the collation of every known manuscript of the Hebrew Scriptures, amount to many thousands, yet these differences are of so little real moment, that their laborious collations afford us scarcely any opportunities of correcting the sacred text in important passages.

Equally satisfactory is the evidence for the integrity of the New Testament, and its uncorruptness in any thing material. So early as the two first centuries of the Christian era, we find the very same facts, and the very same doctrines, universally received by Christians, which we of the present day believe on the credit of the New Testament.

An universal corruption of those writings was impossible, nor can the least vestige of such a corruption be found in history. They could not be corrupted during the life of their authors ; and before their death, copies were dispersed among the different communities of Christians, who were scattered throughout the then known world.

Further, as these books could not be corrupted during the life of their respective authors, and while a great number of witnesses was alive to attest the facts which they record ; so neither could any material alteration take place after their decease, without being detected while the original manuscripts were preserved in the churches.—The Christians, who were instructed by the Apostles or by their immediate successors, travelled into all parts of the world, carrying with them copies of their writings ; from which other copies were multiplied and preserved. Now, as we have already seen, we have an unbroken series of testimonies for the genuineness and authenticity of the New Testament, which can be traced backwards, from the fourth century of the Christian era to the very time of the Apostles ; and these very testimonies are equally applicable to prove its uncorrupted preservation. These sacred records, being universally regarded as the supreme standard of truth, were received by every class of Christians with peculiar respect, as being divine compositions, and possessing an authority belonging to no other books. Whatever controversies, therefore, arose among different sects, (and the church was very early rent with fierce contentions on doctrinal points,) the Scriptures of the New Testament were received and appealed to by every one of them, as being conclusive in all matters of controversy ; consequently it was morally impossible, that any man or body of men should corrupt or falsify them in any fundamental article, should foist into them a single

expression to favour their peculiar tenets, or erase a single sentence, without being detected by thousands.

If any material alteration had been attempted by the orthodox, it would have been detected by the heretics ; and, on the other hand, if a heretic had inserted, altered, or falsified any thing, he would have been exposed by the orthodox, or by other heretics. It is well known that a division commenced in the fourth century, between the eastern and western churches, which, about the middle of the ninth century, became irreconcilable, and subsists to the present day. Now it would have been impossible to alter all the copies in the eastern empire ; and if it had been possible in the east, the copies in the west would have detected the alteration. But, in fact, both the eastern and western copies agree, which could not be expected if either of them was altered or falsified. The uncorrupted preservation of the New Testament is further evident, from the agreement of all the manuscripts. The manuscripts of the New Testament, which are extant, are far more numerous than those of any single classic author whomsoever : Upwards of three hundred and fifty were collated by Griesbach, for his celebrated critical edition. These manuscripts, it is true, are not all entire : Most of them contain only the Gospels ; others, the Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles ; and some contain the Apocalypse or Revelation of John. But they were all written in very different and distant parts of the world ; several of them are upwards of twelve hundred years old, and give us the books of the New Testament in all essential points, perfectly accordant with each other. The various readings in no degree whatever affect the general credit and integrity of the text.

Y.—I am satisfied as to the uncorrupted preservation of the Bible ; but in estimating the credibility of a history, is it not also proper to inquire into the character of the writers ?

T.—It is ; and the inquiry will serve to establish you greatly in the truth of their narrations. They were manifestly good men ; this was acknowledged by their enemies ; and they could not therefore knowingly deceive others. Nor could they be deceived themselves. They could not mistake

the facts in the case of the feeding of the five thousand, and the sudden healing of lepers, and lame and blind persons ; they could not but know, whether he with whom they conversed for forty days was the same Jesus, as he with whom they had had daily and familiar intercourse long before his crucifixion. They could not be mistaken as to his ascension into heaven ; nor as to the fact whether they themselves were suddenly endowed with the power of speaking in languages which they had never studied ; nor as to their being able to work miracles, and to impart the same power to others.

Their worldly interests too lay in concealing the truth. By only not bearing testimony, they might have avoided all their sufferings, and have lived quietly. Would men in such circumstances pretend to have seen what they never saw ; assert facts of which they had no knowledge ; go about lying, to teach virtue ; and though not only convinced of Christ's being an impostor, but having seen the failure of his imposture in his crucifixion, yet persist in carrying it on, and so persist, as to bring upon themselves, for nothing, and with a full knowledge of the consequences, enmity and hatred, danger and death ?

Y.—This was impossible. But is it not also a great confirmation of the truth of the Evangelical history, that it is so circumstantial ?

T.—Certainly it is ; for we never find that forged or false accounts of things abound in particularities ; and where many particulars are related of time, place, persons, &c., there is always a strong presumption of truth, and on the contrary. Here the evidence is more than presumptive. The history of the Evangelists and of the Acts of the Apostles is so full of references to persons then living, and often to persons of consequence, and to places in which miracles and other transactions took place publicly and not in secret,—and the application of all these facts by the first propagators of the Christian religion to give credit to its divine authority was so frequent and explicit, and often so reproving to their opposers,—that if they had not been true, they must have been contradicted, and, if contradicted on good evidence, the authors

must have been overwhelmed with confusion. This argument is rendered stronger when it is considered, that "these things were not done in a corner," nor was the age dark and illiterate and prone to admit fables. The Augustan age was the most learned the world ever saw. The love of arts, sciences, and literature, was the universal passion in almost every part of the Roman empire, where Christianity was first taught in its doctrines, and proclaimed in its facts; and in this inquisitive and discerning era, it rose, flourished, and established itself, with much resistance to its doctrines, but without being once questioned as to the truth of its historical facts.

Y.—Are we not then at the end of the argument? For as the genuineness and authenticity of the books of Scripture have been satisfactorily established, then their relations of miracles, and their record of prophecies, must of course be true; and if the miracles were actually wrought, and the prophecies were really fulfilled, which no one can reasonably doubt, then it must certainly follow, that the Bible contains a clearly authenticated revelation of the will of God.

T.—Doubtless a ground has already been laid sufficiently firm for your entire faith in the divine authority of the Scriptures; but other evidence, confirmatory of your belief, yet remains to be stated; so abundant is the proof.

## CHAPTER V.

### *Internal Evidence of the Truth of Scripture.*

TEACHER.—What is the internal evidence of the truth of Scripture ?

YOUTH.—The excellent nature and tendency of its doctrines ; a subject on which I desire to be furnished with some illustrations.

T.—Consider, first, the explicitness, sublimity, and evident truth of the representations which the Scriptures make of the nature and attributes of God, respecting which the wisest Heathens fell into errors so gross and fatal. He is there exhibited as the great and the sole First Cause of all things, eternal, self-existent, present in all places, knowing all things ; infinite in power and wisdom ; and perfect in goodness, justice, holiness, and truth. These discoveries of revelation have satisfied the human mind on this great and primary doctrine, and have given it a resting-place which it never before found.

Y.—Views so just and clear as to the divine nature, I acknowledge, were never acquired by Heathens.

T.—Consider also the representations which the Scriptures make of the moral condition of man.

Y.—But how does this prove the excellence of the Scriptures ?

T.—By proving their truth ; for all the representations which they make of our moral condition are substantiated by universal observation and experience ; and to know our fallen and corrupt state is the first step to the remedy.

Y.—How does it appear that the account the Scriptures give us of man's moral state, which is indeed sufficiently humbling, is confirmed by observation and experience ?

T.—The Old and New Testaments agree in representing the human race as actually vicious, and capable, when without moral check and control, of the greatest enormities ; so that



not only individual happiness, but social also, is constantly obstructed or endangered. To this the history of all ages bears witness, and present experience gives its testimony.

But they not only assume men to be actually vicious, but vicious in consequence of a moral taint in their nature,—originally and permanently so, but for those provisions of grace and means of sanctity of which they speak. What is thus represented as doctrine appeals to our reason through the evidence of unquestionable fact. The strong tendency of man to crime cannot be denied. Civil penal laws are enacted for no other purpose than to repress it; they are multiplied in the most civilized states to shut out the evil in all those new directions towards which the multiplied relations of man, and his increased power, arising from increased intelligence, have given it its impulse. Every legal deed, with its seals and witnesses, bears testimony to that opinion as to human nature which the experience of man has impressed on man; and history itself is a record chiefly of human guilt, because examples of crime have every where and at all times been much more frequent than examples of virtue. This tendency to evil, the Scriptures tell us, arises from “the heart,”—the nature and disposition of man; and it is not otherwise to be accounted for. Some indeed have represented the corruption of the race as the result of association and example; but if men were naturally inclined to good, and averse to evil, how is it that not a few individuals only, but the whole race, have become evil by mutual association? This would be to make the weaker cause the more efficient, which is manifestly absurd.

Y.—Is it not a peculiar excellency in the Christian religion, that it points out clearly the means of the pardon of sin, and of our recovery from our fallen and corrupt state?

T.—It is; and this leads me to notice the next leading doctrine of the Scriptures, which is, the restoration of man to the divine favour through the merits of the vicarious and sacrificial death of Christ, the incarnate Son of God; and that you may rightly understand this most important doctrine, you must attend to the following particulars:—

The Christian doctrine of atonement is grounded upon the liability of man to punishment in another life, for sins committed against the law of God in this. Men are capable of committing sin, and sin is productive of misery and disorder. These positions cannot be denied. That to violate the laws of God and to despise his authority are not light crimes, is clear from considering them in their general effect upon society, and upon the world. Nor is there any foundation to suppose, that the punishment assigned to sin by the judicial appointment of the Supreme Governor, is confined to the present life. The obvious reason of the case is in favour of the doctrine of future punishment ; for not only is there an unequal administration of punishments in the present life, so that many eminent offenders pass through the present state without any visible manifestation of the divine displeasure against their conduct, but there are strong and convincing proofs that we are placed in a state of trial, which continues throughout life, and the result of which can only be known, and consequently we ourselves can only become subjects of reward or punishment, after our existence in this world has terminated.

It is also the doctrine of Scripture, that this future punishment of the incorrigible shall be final and unlimited. That atonement for the sins of men which was made by the death of Christ, is represented in the Christian system as the means by which mankind may be delivered from this awful catastrophe. This end it professes to accomplish by means which, with respect to the supreme Governor himself, preserve his character from being mistaken, and maintain the authority of his government ; and with respect to man, give him the strongest possible reason for hope, and render more favourable the circumstances of his earthly probation.

Y.—This is so deeply important, that I am anxious to hear the matter fully explained.

T.—Attend then.

How sin may be forgiven, without leading to such conceptions of the divine character as would encourage disobedience, and thereby weaken the influence of the divine government, must be considered as a problem of very difficult solution. A

government which admitted no forgiveness would sink the guilty to despair; a government which never punishes offence, is a contradiction,—it cannot exist. Not to punish, is to dissolve authority: To punish without mercy, is to destroy; and, where all are guilty, the destruction would be universal. That we cannot sin with impunity, is a matter determined. The Ruler of the world is not careless of the conduct of his creatures; for that penal consequences are attached to offence is not a subject of argument, but is made evident from daily observation of the events and circumstances of the present life. It is a principle, therefore, already established, that the authority of God must be preserved; and it ought to be remarked, that in that kind of administration which restrains evil by penalty, and encourages obedience by favour and hope, we and all moral creatures are the interested parties, and not the divine Governor himself, whom, because of his independent and perfect nature, our transgressions cannot injure. The reasons, therefore, which compel him to maintain his authority do not terminate in himself. If he becomes a party against offenders, it is for our sake, and for the sake of the moral order of the universe, to which sin, if encouraged by a negligent administration, and by entire or frequent impunity, would be the source of endless disorder and misery: And if the granting of pardon to offence be strongly and even severely guarded, we are to refer it to the moral necessity of the case, as arising out of the general welfare of accountable creatures, liable to the deep evil of sin, and not to any reluctance on the part of our Maker to forgive, much less to any thing vindictive in his nature,—charges which have been most inconsiderately and unfairly brought against the Christian doctrine of Christ's vicarious sufferings. If it then be true, that the relief of offending man from future punishment, and his restoration to the divine favour, ought, for the interests of mankind themselves, and for the instruction and caution of other beings, to be so bestowed, that no license shall be given to offence; that God himself, whilst he manifests his compassion, should not appear less just less holy, than the maintenance of an efficient and even awful authority requires; that his commands shall be

felt to be as compelling, and that disobedience shall as truly, though not so unconditionally, subject us to the deserved penalty, as though no hope of forgiveness had been exhibited ; —I ask, on what scheme, save that which is developed in the New Testament, these necessary conditions are provided for? Necessary they are, unless we contend for a license and an impunity which shall annul the efficient government of the universe,—a point which no reasonable man will contend for ; and if not, then he must allow that this is strong internal evidence of the truth of the doctrine of Scripture, which makes the offer of pardon consequent only upon the securities we have before mentioned. If it be said, that sin may be pardoned in the exercise of the divine prerogative, the reply is, that if this prerogative were exercised towards a part of mankind only, the passing by of the others would be with difficulty reconciled to the divine character ; and if the benefit were extended to all, government would be at an end. Were this principle to regulate human governments, every criminal would escape, and judicial forms would become a subject for ridicule. Nor is it the principle which the divine Being, in his conduct to men in the present state, acts upon, though in this world punishments are not final and absolute. Repentance does not restore health injured by intemperance, property wasted by profusion, or character once stained by dishonourable practices. If repentance alone could secure pardon, then all must be pardoned, and government dissolved, as in the case of forgiveness by the exercise of mere prerogative ; if a selection be made, then different and discordant principles of government are introduced into the divine administration, which cannot be maintained.

To avoid the force of these obvious difficulties, some have added reformation to repentance ; and would restrain forgiveness to those only, who, to their penitence, add a course of future obedience to the divine law. But a change of conduct does not, any more than repentance, repair the mischiefs of former misconduct. Even in this world we see that the sobriety of the reformed man does not always restore health ; and the industry and economy of the formerly negligent and waste-

ful, repair not the losses of extravagance. Nor is it necessary to dwell upon the contradiction which this theory involves to all the principles of government established among men, which in flagrant cases never suspend punishment in anticipation of a change of conduct; but in the infliction of penalty look steadily to the crime actually committed, and to the necessity of vindicating the violated majesty of the laws.

Y.—These are great difficulties.

T.—Yes; the question, How may mercy be extended to offending creatures, the subjects of the divine government, without encouraging vice, by lowering the righteous and holy character of God, and the authority of his government, in the maintenance of which the whole universe of beings are interested? is at once one of the most important and one of the most difficult which can employ the human mind. None of the theories which have been opposed to Christianity afford a satisfactory solution of the problem. They assume principles, either destructive to moral government, or which cannot in the circumstances of man be acted upon. The only answer is found in the holy Scriptures. They alone show, and indeed they alone profess to show, how God may be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. Other schemes show how he may be merciful; but the difficulty does not lie there. This meets it, by declaring “the righteousness of God,” at the same time that it proclaims his mercy. The voluntary sufferings of an incarnate divine Person “for us,” in our room and stead, magnify the justice of God; display his hatred to sin; proclaim “the exceeding sinfulness” of transgression, by the deep and painful sufferings of the substitute; warn the persevering offender of the terribleness as well as the certainty of his punishment; and open the gates of salvation to every believing penitent. It is a part of the same divine plan to promise the influence of the Holy Spirit to awaken penitence, and to lead the wandering soul back to Himself; to renew the fallen nature of man in righteousness, at the moment he is justified through faith; and to place him in circumstances in which he may henceforth “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” All the ends of government are here answered.

No license is given to offence ; the moral law is unrepealed ; a day of judgment is still appointed ; future and eternal punishments still exhibit their awful sanctions ; a new and singular display of the awful purity of the divine character is afforded ; yet pardon is offered to all who seek it ; and the whole world may be saved !

Y.—These are indeed glorious discoveries, and ought to kindle supreme and everlasting love to God in our hearts, and to inspire our lips with ceaseless praises.

T.—And, had I time, I might give you other instances of the excellent doctrines which the Scriptures contain ; as that respecting the influences of the Holy Spirit, which give a strength to men which they have not by nature ; the doctrine of a providence, divine, universal, tender, and watchful ; and especially the views afforded us of man's immortality and of a future life. These, however, you must consider at your leisure.

Y.—But you said something of the moral tendency of the Scriptures, as a part of the internal evidence of their truth.

T.—This tendency is obvious. No where but in the Scriptures have we a perfect system of morals ; and the deficiencies of pagan morality only exalt the purity, the comprehensiveness, the practicability of ours. The character of the Being acknowledged as Supreme must always impress itself upon moral feeling and practice ; the obligation of which rests upon his will. We have seen the views entertained by pagans on this all-important point, and their effects. The God of the Bible is “holy,” without spot ; “just,” without intermission or partiality ; “good,” boundlessly benevolent and beneficent ; and his law is the image of himself, “holy, just, and good.” These great moral qualities are not, as with them, so far as they were apprehended, merely abstract, and therefore comparatively feeble in their influence. In the person of Christ, our God incarnate, they are seen exemplified in action, displaying themselves amidst human relations, and the actual circumstances of human life.—With them, the authority of moral rules was either the opinion of the wise, or the tradition of the ancient, confirmed, it is true, in some degree by

observation and experience ; but to us, they are given as commands immediately from the supreme Governor, and ratified as His by the most solemn and explicit attestations. With them, many great moral principles, being indistinctly apprehended, were matters of doubt and debate : To us, the explicit manner in which they are given excludes both ; for it cannot be questioned, whether we are commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves ; to do to others as we would they should do to us, a precept which comprehends almost all relative morality in one plain principle ; to forgive our enemies ; to love all mankind ; to live “righteously” and “soberly,” as well as “godly ;” or that magistrates must be a terror only to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well ; that subjects are to render honour to whom honour, and tribute to whom tribute, is due ; that masters are to be just and merciful, and servants faithful and obedient. By Christianity, impurity of thought and desire is restrained in an equal degree as their overt acts in the lips and conduct. Humility, meekness, gentleness, placability, disinterestedness, and charity, are all as clearly and solemnly enjoined as the grosser vices are prohibited ; and on the unruly tongue itself is impressed “the law of kindness.” Nor are the injunctions feeble : They are strictly LAW, and not mere advice and recommendations. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord ;” and thus our entrance into heaven, and our escape from perdition, are made to depend upon this preparation of mind.

Y.—But is there not a species of evidence in favour of Christianity, which is called collateral ?

T.—There is : And it arises from so many sources, that it cannot be fully exhibited in this conversation ; but I will give you one or two examples of it.

Y.—You will oblige me.

T.—The marvellous propagation of Christianity in the three first centuries is evidence of this kind, and intimates to us that its facts could not be disputed ; that miracles were really wrought, to produce conviction in the minds of men so rapidly and effectually ; and that a divine power accompanied the promulgation of its doctrines,

Y.—But did not the doctrine of Mahomet spread rapidly and extensively?

T.—Yes; but that was propagated by the sword, and entitled all who embraced it to honours and privileges, and above all, encouraged men in their vices: But in less than three centuries, Christianity overturned Paganism in the Roman empire, and spread itself through the civilized world, in opposition to human power; and when, through a great part of this period, its professors were exposed to continual reproach, and often to terrible persecutions; and although it discouraged, reprov'd, and forbade every kind of vice. The first Preachers of the Gospel, though unsupported by human power, and unpatronized by philosophic wisdom, and even in opposition to both, succeeded in effecting a revolution in the opinions and manners of a great portion of the civilized world, to which there is no parallel in the history of mankind. Though aspersed by the slander of the malicious, and exposed to the sword of the powerful, in a short period of time they induced multitudes of various nations, who were equally distinguished by the peculiarity of their manners, and the diversity of their language, to forsake the religion of their ancestors. The converts whom they made deserted ceremonies and institutions, which were defended by vigorous authority, sanctified by remote age, and associated with the most alluring gratification of the passions.

After their death the same doctrines were taught, and the same effects followed, though successive and grievous persecutions were waged against all who professed their faith in Christ, by successive Emperors and inferior Magistrates; so that about A.D. 140, Justin Martyr writes, “There is not a nation, Greek or Barbarian, or of any other name, even of those who wander in tribes, and live in tents, among whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered to the Father and Creator of the universe in the name of the crucified Jesus.”

Y.—The success of Christianity, and that of the religion of Mahomet, I now plainly perceive are not parallel, but contrary cases.

T.—The actual effect produced by this new religion upon



society, and which it is still producing, is another point in the collateral evidence. In every pagan country where it has prevailed, it has abolished idolatry, with its sanguinary and polluted rites. It also effected this mighty revolution,—that the sanctions of religion should no longer be in favour of the worst passions and practices, but be directed against them. It has raised the standard of morality; and by that means, even where its full effects have not been suffered to display themselves, has insensibly improved the manners of every Christian state. What heathen nations are, in point of morals, is now well known; and the information on this subject, which for several years past has been increasing, has put it out of the power of infidels to urge the superior manners of either China or Hindostan. It has abolished infanticide and human sacrifices, so prevalent among ancient and modern Heathens; put an end to polygamy and divorce; and, by the institution of marriage in an indissoluble bond, has given birth to a felicity and sanctity in the domestic circle which it never before knew. It has exalted the condition and character of woman, and by that means has humanized man. It abolished domestic slavery in ancient Europe; and from its principles the struggle which is now maintained with African slavery draws its energy, and promises a triumph as complete. It has given a milder character to war, and taught modern nations to treat their prisoners with humanity, and to restore them by exchange to their respective countries. It has laid the basis of a jurisprudence more just and equal; given civil rights to subjects; and placed restraints on absolute power. It has crowned its achievements by its charity. Hospitals, schools, and many other institutions for the aid of the aged and the poor, are almost exclusively its own creations, and they abound most where its influence is most powerful. The same effects to this day are resulting from its influence in those heathen countries into which the Gospel has been carried by Missionaries sent out from this and other Christian states.

Y.—These effects surely prove, that so benevolent, holy, and beneficial a system of religion is worthy of all acceptance.

## CHAPTER VI.

### *Objections Answered.*

YOUTH.—I thank you for this account of the evidences of the truth of the Scriptures, which has greatly confirmed and established my faith ; but I have occasionally heard objections to the Scriptures, which I will thank you to enable me to answer, should I again meet with them in reading or in conversation.

TEACHER.—State those of them you recollect.

Y.—Against the evidence from miracles I have heard it urged, that the Egyptian magicians, in several instances, wrought the same miracles as Moses.

T.—The wonders wrought by the magicians were probably juggling tricks. These idolaters were perhaps assisted in their sleights of hand by evil spirits ; but when they went beyond what could not by any sleight of hand or subtle contrivances be imitated, as in the plague of lice, they were themselves obliged to confess the interposition of “ the finger of God.”

Y.—But several pretended heathen miracles, as well as those said to take place in the Church of Rome, are often mentioned by infidels.

T.—They are ; yet even they hesitate to found any serious argument upon them. A learned Divine has laid down some just rules for trying miracles, and observes,—

That we may reasonably suspect any accounts of miracles to be false, if they are not published till long after the time when they are said to have been performed,—or if they were not first published in the place where they are said to have been wrought,—or if they probably were suffered to pass without examination in the time and at the place where they took their rise. These are general grounds of suspicion ; to which may be added particular ones, arising from any circum-

stances which plainly indicate imposture and artifice on the one hand, or credulity and imagination on the other.

Before such tests all pagan, Popish, and other pretended miracles, without exception, shrink ; and they are not for a moment to be brought into comparison with works wrought publicly, in the sight of thousands, and those often opposers of the system to be established by them,—works not by any ingenuity whatever to be resolved into artifice on the one part, or into the effects of imagination on the other,—works performed before scholars, statesmen, rulers, persecutors ; of which the instances are numerous, and the places in which they occurred various,—works published at the time, and on the very spot,—works not in favour of a ruling system, but directed against every other religious establishment under heaven ; and for giving their testimony to which, the original witnesses had reason to expect, and did in most instances incur, reproach, stripes, imprisonment, and death.

Y.—This is very convincing as to miracles ; but as to the prophecies of Scripture, I have heard them compared to the heathen oracles, which pretended to foretel future things, and whose predictions are in some instances said to have been remarkably accomplished.

T.—No contrast can be greater.

The first great distinction lies in this, that none of the predictions ever uttered by the Delphic or other oracles went deep into futurity. They relate to events on the eve of taking place, and whose preparatory circumstances were known. The oracles did not even pretend to foresee things at the distance of a few years ; though even a hundred years had been a very limited period in comparison of the range of the prescience of inspired Prophets, who looked through the course of succeeding ages, to the end of time.

A second contrast lies in the ambiguity of the oracular responses. The prophecies of Scripture are sometimes obscure, though this does not apply to the most eminent of those which have been most signally fulfilled, as we have already seen ; but they never equivocate. For this the Pythian oracle was notorious. Historians relate, that Croesus, who had

expended large sums upon the agents of this delusion, was tricked by an equivocation, through which, interpreting the response most favourably for himself, he was induced to make an unsuccessful war on Cyrus. In his subsequent captivity he repeatedly reproached the oracle, and charged it with falsehood. The response delivered to Pyrrhus was of the same kind; and was so expressed as to be true, whether Pyrrhus should conquer the Romans, or the Romans Pyrrhus. Many other instances of the same kind are given; not to mention the trifling, and even bantering and jocose, oracles which were sometimes pronounced.

The venality, wealth, and servility of the managers of the Delphic oracle present another contrast to the poverty and disinterestedness of the Jewish Prophets, whom no gifts could bribe, and no power awe in the discharge of their duty. Demosthenes, in one of his speeches to the Athenians, publicly charges this oracle with being "gained over to the interests of King Philip;" and the Greek historians give other instances in which it had been corrupted by money. Can then the prophecies of Scripture be paralleled with these dark, and venal, and delusive oracles, without impiety? And could any higher honour be wished for the Jewish Prophets, than the comparison into which they are thus brought with the corrupt agents of Paganism at Delphos and other places?

Y.—Ridicule has been sometimes cast upon the Prophets by profane writers, for those significant actions by which they illustrated their predictions; as when Jeremiah hides his girdle in a hole of the rock, and Ezekiel weighs the hair of his head in balances. How is this explained?

T.—This ridicule can only proceed from ignorance. In the early ages of the world, the deficiency of language was often supplied by signs; and when language was improved, the practice remained after the necessity was over; especially among the Easterns, whose natural temperament inclined them to this mode of conversation. The charges then of absurdity and fanaticism brought against the Prophets vanish of themselves. The absurdity of an action consists in its being extravagant and insignificant; but use and a fixed application

made the actions in question both sober and pertinent. We may add, that several of these actions were performed in vision; and that, considering the genius of the people who were addressed, they were calculated strongly to excite their attention, which was the end for which they were adopted.

Y.—It is objected to the Bible, that it represents God as giving command to the Israelites to exterminate the nations of Canaan.

T.—This objection cannot be argued upon the mere ground that it is contrary to the divine justice or mercy to cut off a people indiscriminately, from the eldest to the youngest, since this is done in earthquakes, pestilences, &c. The character of the God of nature is not, therefore, contradicted by that ascribed to the God of the Bible. The whole objection resolves itself into this question: Was it consistent with the character of God to employ human agents in this work of destruction? Who can prove that it was not? No one: And yet here lies the whole stress of the objection. The Jews were not rendered more cruel by their being so commissioned; for we find them much more merciful in their practice than other ancient nations: Nor can this instance be pleaded in favour of exterminating wars; since there was in the case a special commission for a special purpose, by which it was limited. Other considerations are also to be included. The sins of the Canaanites were of so gross a nature, that it was necessary to mark them with signal punishments for the admonition of surrounding nations: The employing of the Israelites as instruments, under a special and publicly proclaimed commission, connected the punishment more visibly with the offence, than if it had been inflicted by the array of warring elements; whilst the Israelites themselves would be more deeply impressed with the guilt of idolatry, and its ever-accompanying polluted and sanguinary rites. Finally, the Canaanites had been long spared, and in the mean time both warned by partial judgments, and reproved by the remaining adherents of the patriarchal religion who resided among them.

Y.—The intentional offering of Isaac by Abraham has often been objected to.

T.—The answer is, 1. That Abraham, who was in the habit of sensible communication with God, could have no doubt of having received a divine command ; and the right of God to take away the life he had given cannot be questioned. 2. That he proceeded to execute the command of God in faith, as the Apostle Paul has stated, that God would raise his son from the dead. The whole transaction was extraordinary, and cannot, therefore, be judged by common rules ; and it could only be fairly objected to, if it had been so stated as to encourage human sacrifices. Here, however, are sufficient guards. An indubitable divine command was given ; the sacrifice was prevented by the same authority ; and the history stands in a book which represents human sacrifices as an abomination to God.—But I will save you the trouble of enumerating several minor objections, by glancing at them collectively.

The objections which have been raised against characters and transactions in the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings, are dissipated by the single consideration, that, where they are obviously immoral or unjustifiable, they are never approved, and are merely stated as facts of history. The conduct of Ehud, of Samson, and of Jephthah, may be given as instances.

The advice of David, when on his death-bed, respecting Joab and Shimei, has been attributed to his private resentment. This is not the fact. He spoke in his character of King and Magistrate, and gave his advice on public grounds, as committing the kingdom to his son.

The conduct of David also towards the Ammonites, in putting them “under saws and harrows of iron,” has been the subject of severe animadversion. But the expression means no more than that he employed them in laborious works, as sawing, making iron harrows, hewing wood, and making bricks, the Hebrew prefix signifying “to” as well as “under.” “He put them to saws and harrows of iron,” (some render it iron mines,) “and to axes of iron, and made them to pass through the brick-kiln.”

With respect to the imprecations found in many parts of Scripture, and which have been represented as expressions of

revenge and malice, it has been often and satisfactorily observed, that they are predictions, and not anathemas ; the imperative mood being put for the future tense, according to the Hebrew idiom.

With respect to all other objections, it has been well observed, “that a little skill in the original languages of the Scriptures, their idioms and properties, and in the times, occasions, and scope of the several books, as well as in the antiquities and customs of those countries which were the scenes of the transactions recorded, will always clear the main difficulties.”

Y.—These general observations will be of use to me in future. But what say you to the common objection, that the Scriptures require us to believe things incomprehensible to human reason ?

T.—I answer that many doctrines and duties are comprehensible enough ; no mystery at all is involved in them. And as to incomprehensible subjects, nothing is more obvious than that a fact may be the subject of revelation, as that God is eternal and omnipresent, whilst the mode may still remain mysterious and incomprehensible. The fact itself is not hidden, or expressed in language or in symbol so equivocal as to throw the meaning into difficulty,—the only sense in which the objection could be valid. As a fact, it is clearly revealed that these are attributes of the divine nature ; but both, notwithstanding that clear and indubitable revelation, are still incomprehensible. It is not revealed how God is eternal and omnipresent, nor is such a revelation pretended ; but it is revealed that he is so ;—not how a trinity of Persons exists in unity of essence ; but that such is the mode of the divine existence. If, however, men hesitate to admit incomprehensible subjects as to matters of faith, they cannot be permitted to fly for relief from revelation to philosophy, and much less to assert its superiority, as to clearness of manifestation, to the holy Scriptures. There too it will be seen that mystery and revelation go inseparably together ; that he who will not admit the mystery cannot have the benefit of the revelation ; and that he who takes the revelation of facts embraces at the

same time the mystery of their causes. The facts, for instance, of the attraction of gravitation, of cohesion, of electricity, of magnetism, of congelation, of thawing, of evaporation, are all admitted. The experimental and inductive philosophy of modern times has made many revelations of the relations, and, in some instances, of the proximate causes, of these phenomena ; but the real causes are all confessedly hidden.

With respect to mechanics, says a writer who has devoted his life to philosophical studies,\* “this science is conversant about force, matter, time, motion, space ; each of these has occasioned the most elaborate disquisitions, and the most violent disputes. Let it be asked, What is force ? If the answerer be candid, his reply will be, ‘I cannot tell, so as to satisfy every inquirer, or so as to enter into the essence of the thing.’ Again, What is matter ? ‘I cannot tell.’ What is motion ? ‘I cannot tell ;’ and so of the rest. The fact of the communication of motion from one body to another is as inexplicable as the communication of divine influences. How then can the former be admitted with any face, while the latter is denied solely on the ground of its incomprehensibility ?”

Y.—It has been objected to the Mosaic chronology, that it fixes the era of creation only about four thousand years earlier than the Christian era ; and against this, evidence has been brought from the chronology of certain ancient nations.

T.—The objections drawn from this source have of late rapidly weakened, and are in fact given up by many whose deference to the authority of Scripture is very slight, though but a few years ago nothing was more confidently urged by sceptical writers than the refutation of Moses by the Chinese, Hindoo, and Egyptian chronologies, founded, as it was then stated, on very ancient astronomical observations preserved to the present day. It is, however, now clearly proved, that the astronomical tables, from which it has been attempted to assign a prodigious antiquity to the Hindoos, have been calculated backwards ; † and among the Chinese the earliest

\* Dr. Gregory's Letters on the Christian Religion.

† Cuvier's Theory of the Earth.



astronomical observation that appears to rest upon good grounds, is now found to be one made not more than two thousand nine hundred years ago.\* As for the conclusion drawn from the supposed zodiacs in the temples of Esneh and Dendara in Egypt, it is now strongly doubted whether the figures represented upon them are astronomical or mythological, that is, whether they are zodiacs at all. Their astronomical character is strongly denied by Dr. Richardson, a late traveller, who examined them with great care, and who gives large reasons for his opinion. Even if the astronomical character of these assumed zodiacs be allowed, they are found to prove nothing. M. Biot, an eminent French mathematician, has recently fixed the date of the oldest of them at only seven hundred and sixteen years before Christ.

Y.—Geologists have sometimes contended, that the period of time requisite for the formation of the primitive structure of the earth, argues that the world is much older than the Mosaic account seems to intimate.

T.—But geologists of equal eminence have been of a contrary opinion; and the great differences among those who profess this science, render objections of this kind of little weight. Besides, two things are assumed in the objection without any proof: 1. That the primitive strata were not created in their present composite form: 2. That if progressively formed, the processes were always as slow as at present:—Neither of which can be proved.

Y.—Has not the general deluge been objected to?

T.—It has; but the whole earth bears testimony to the fact. It is not only preserved in the traditions of all nations; but, after all the philosophical arguments which were formerly urged against it, philosophy has at length acknowledged that the present surface of the earth must have been submerged under water. “Not only,” says Kirwan, “in every region of Europe, but also of both the old and new continents, immense quantities of marine shells, either dispersed or collected, have been discovered.” This and several other facts seem to prove, that at least a great part of the present earth

\* Cuvier's Theory of the Earth.

was, before the last general convulsion to which it has been subjected, the bed of an ocean which, at that time, was withdrawn from it. Other facts seem also to prove with sufficient evidence, that this recession of the waters, which once covered the parts now inhabited by men, was not gradual, but violent, such as may be supposed from the brief but emphatic relation of Moses. The violent action of water has left its traces in various undisputed phenomena. "Stratified mountains of various heights exist in different parts of Europe, and of both continents, in and between whose strata various substances of marine and some vegetables of terrestrial origin, repose either in their natural state or petrified."\* "To overspread the plains of the Arctic circle with the shells of Indian seas, and with the bodies of elephants and rhinoceri, surrounded by masses of submarine vegetation; to accumulate on a single spot, as at La Bolca, in promiscuous confusion, the marine productions of the four quarters of the globe; what conceivable instrument would be efficacious but the rush of mighty waters?"† These facts, about which there is no dispute, and which are acknowledged by the advocates of each of the prevailing geological theories, give a sufficient attestation to the deluge of Noah, in which "the fountains of the great deep were broken up," and from which precisely such phenomena might be expected to follow.

Y.—Has it not been supposed that the ark could not contain the living creatures which are said to have been received into it?

T.—Yes; but without reason. Dr. Hales proves the ark to have been of the burden of forty-two thousand four hundred and thirteen tons; and asks, "Can we doubt of its being sufficient to contain eight persons, and about two hundred or two hundred and fifty pair of four-footed animals,—a number to which, according to M. Buffon, all the various distinct species may be reduced,—together with all the subsistence necessary for a twelvemonth, with the fowls of the air, and such reptiles and insects as cannot live under water?" All

\* Kirwan's Geological Essays.

† Gisborne's "Testimony of Natural Theology."

these various animals were also controlled by the power of God, whose special agency is supposed in the whole transaction, and “the lion was made to lie down with the kid.”

Y.—Is it not objected, that all the nations of men so different in colour and feature, could not, as the Scriptures declare, descend from one common pair?

T.—Formerly this was objected; but now even infidel and sceptical philosophers acknowledge that colour and other differences indicate only varieties in man, but do not prove distinct species; and so this objection may be considered as given up.

Y.—These are certainly the most weighty objections I have met with, and I see that they admit of satisfactory answers; and that even if they presented us with greater and real difficulties, they would weigh nothing against that great mass of evidence which establishes the holy Scriptures to be in truth the word of God.

T.—Go then, youth, and “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest” these sacred writings. Let no sophistry of wicked men lead you from the truth, and rob you of your birthright to salvation and immortality. The Bible will be your guide through life, your comfort in affliction, and your hope in death, if you embrace the doctrines it teaches, and believe on the Saviour it sets before you. It is a book which none but

“Bold, bad men despise;”

and which the wisest and best men of all ages have loved and revered as the “word of truth, and the Gospel of salvation.”

THE END.

# INDEX TO SCRIPTURES

## WHICH ARE MORE OR LESS ILLUSTRATED.

GENESIS.				Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
				3	15.....	vi	38, 39, 281
						viii	498
						ix	250
						x	430
						xi	140
					16-19. ....	x	436
					17-19. ....	x	79
					19.....	iv	339
						x	429
					22.....	x	138, 272
					22, 23. ....	iii	69
						vi	34
					23, 24. ....	x	436
					24.....	iii	350
						vi	41, 46, 343
						ix	237
				4	3-5.....	iii	142
						xi	120
					4.....	vi	40
					7.....	xi	126, 464
					10.....	iv	429
					14.....	iii	70
					15.....	vi	52
					16.....	vi	47
					26.....	vi	52
				5	3.....	x	434, 465, 485
					24.....	x	384
				6	1, 2.....	vi	53
					3.....	viii	465
						x	181, 365, 491
					5.....	x	457, 466
					6.....	vi	55
					12.....	x	458
					13.....	x	458
				7	1.....	x	384
					2.....	vi	55
					11.....	ix	347, 352
					24.....	vi	54
				8	4.....	vi	54
					8-12.....	viii	145
Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page				
1	1.....	vi	18, 19				
		ix	26, 344, 348,				
			494				
		x	137, 310				
	2.....	vi	20, 26				
		viii	466, 470				
		ix	345				
		x	363				
	5.....	xii	87				
	9.....	ix	347, 352				
	10.....	x	59				
	14.....	vi	21				
		ix	349				
	14-16. ....	vi	27				
	16.....	vi	21				
		ix	494				
	26.....	vi	20, 27				
		viii	424				
		ix	336				
		x	137, 386				
	27.....	x	269				
	31.....	viii	466				
		x	71, 393				
2	3.....	vi	29				
	7.....	vi	27				
		ix	475				
		x	386				
	17.....	iii	99				
		x	101, 401, 429				
		xi	276				
	23, 24. ....	x	406				
3	1.....	iv	376				
	2.....	x	436				
	5.....	viii	210				
	8.....	x	269, 270				
	9.....	x	278				
	15.....	iii	70, 234				
		iv	66				

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page	Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
8	10-12. ....	xii	93	19	23. ....	x	278
	21. ....	x	466		24. ....	x	136
9	4. ....	vi	57		24, 25. ....	vi	67
	6. ....	x	389	20	2. ....	vi	66
		xii	109, 118		3. ....	x	273
	13. ....	vi	57	21	13. ....	vii	380
	21-27. ....	vi	58		33. ....	x	271
10	—.....	vi	59	22	7. ....	ii	253
	9. ....	viii	408		14. ....	x	191
	9, 10. ....	vi	59		15. ....	vii	524
11	5-9. ....	vi	60			x	164
	7. ....	vi	20	18	.....	iii	487
		x	138			vii	380
12	1, &c. ....	vi	64, 156			viii	498
	3. ....	vii	380			xi	309
13	14-17 ....	vi	64	23	3. ....	vi	68
	17. ....	iii	32	24	63. ....	ii	253
14	18-20. ....	vi	66	25	4. ....	ii	387
	19. ....	viii	498		23. ....	xi	313
15	1. ....	x	268, 270, 278		29-34. ....	vi	68
	5. ....	vii	380	28	12. ....	vi	69
	6. ....	iii	487		13. ....	x	163, 279
		vi	64, 258, 279		16. ....	ii	265
		xi	235			x	163, 164
	12. ....	iii	208		17. ....	iii	208
	15. ....	viii	205	29	18. ....	vi	69
16	7. ....	x	270		27. ....	viii	145
	9. ....	vii	524	31	11. ....	x	164
	10. ....	vii	380		13. ....	x	164
	10-12. ....	vi	67, 157	32	24. ....	vi	69
	13. ....	x	162		30. ....	x	163
17	1. ....	iii	451	35	2. ....	iv	502
		vi	7, 342	39	9. ....	xii	19
		viii	396	42	36. ....	iv	380
		x	59, 170	46	34. ....	viii	177
	2. ....	vi	64	48	3. ....	x	138
	6. ....	x	232		15. ....	x	170
	7. ....	xii	248		15, 16. ....	x	164
	7, 8. ....	xi	312	49	1. ....	vi	161
	7-14. ....	xii	224		1-28. ....	vi	70
	14. ....	xii	226		10. ....	iii	234
	16. ....	vii	379			vi	70, 196
	18-21. ....	vii	376			ix	253
18	14. ....	iii	424			xii	324
		iv	228		10-12. ....	x	272
	17. ....	ii	257		18. ....	iii	385
		x	162			x	271
	19. ....	iv	501	50	20. ....	xi	478
	22. ....	x	162				
	25. ....	vii	64				
		ix	139, 368				
		x	35, 98, 162				
		xi	7, 351				
	33. ....	x	163				

## EXODUS.

1	11. ....	vi	73
2	3. ....	vi	74

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
2	13.....	vi	75
3	2.....	vi	76
		vii	524
		x	164, 166
	6.....	x	164, 170
	14.....	ix	486
		x	136, 163, 190
4	12.....	ii	343
	16.....	x	201
5	3.....	xi	115, 157
6	2, 3.....	x	194
	12.....	xii	19
	30.....	xii	19
7	1.....	x	201
	11.....	ix	216
	11-22.....	vi	77
	19-21.....	ix	238
	22.....	ix	237
8	7.....	vi	77
		ix	237
	7, 8.....	ix	238
	8.....	ix	239
	11.....	ix	237
	18.....	ix	237
	19.....	iii	309
10	20-27.....	vi	77
	23.....	ix	203
	25.....	xi	157
11	5.....	ix	204
	10.....	vi	77
12	3.....	vi	77
	11.....	xii	292
	42.....	x	177
16	16-29.....	viii	143
	21-29.....	xii	91
	23.....	xii	94
	26.....	viii	147
		xii	94
17	11-13.....	iv	499
	15.....	x	191
18	21.....	xii	154
20	1-17.....	vi	81
	2, 3.....	x	163
	3.....	x	130, 162, 330
	8-11.....	viii	140
		xii	88
	12.....	xii	136
	13.....	xii	109, 116, 117
	14.....	ix	78
		xii	133
	15.....	xii	110
	17.....	xii	110
	19.....	vi	299
	24.....	iii	185

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
22	20.....	x	332
	21.....	vi	95
23	20-21.....	x	165
30	12-16.....	xi	93
31	2.....	viii	468
32	34.....	x	166
33	2.....	x	165, 166, 171
	14, 15.....	x	165
	17.....	xi	314
	18.....	iii	145, 266
	18-23.....	iv	148
	19.....	xi	314
	20.....	x	171
	23.....	x	171
34	6.....	ii	78, 336
		iv	165
	6, 7.....	ix	363
	15.....	vi	138
40	34.....	x	163

LEVITICUS.

1	2.....	vii	527
	3.....	xi	115
4	21.....	xi	107
	29.....	xi	107
5	15, 16.....	xi	94
6	25.....	xi	107
10	11.....	ix	186
15	31.....	xi	95
16	18-20.....	vi	87
	21.....	xi	98
	30-34.....	xi	93
17	10, 11.....	xi	93, 119
	11.....	xi	118
19	15.....	xii	154
	18.....	vi	31, 256
		xii	103
	30.....	vii	526
22	9.....	xi	34
25	35.....	vi	95
	39.....	vi	94
	49.....	xii	111
26	28.....	xi	32
	46.....	x	187

NUMBERS.

5	8.....	xi	39
6	24-37.....	x	140
8	17, 18.....	ix	153
		xii	336
10	31.....	ix	349

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
16	22.....	ix	471
19	19.....	xii	273
21	9.....	ix	153
23	19.....	x	105
	23.....	iv	19
24	14.....	vi	161
27	21.....	ix	154
35	16.....	xii	117
	25.....	ix	155
	28.....	ix	155
	30.....	vii	25, 27

## DEUTERONOMY.

2	5.....	xi	333
4	2.....	ix	186
	5, 6.....	iv	506
	6.....	vii	519
	7.....	viii	393
		x	271
	9, 10.....	iv	511
	19.....	ix	348
	24.....	vi	46
	30.....	vi	161
	32.....	x	390
	35.....	ix	461
5	15.....	ix	154
	22.....	x	187
	25.....	vi	299
	26.....	x	163
6	4.....	ix	461
		x	137
	5.....	v	167
		vi	31, 256
	7.....	iv	501
		xii	68, 141
	16.....	x	182
	24.....	vii	519
	25.....	iii	390
7	6.....	vi	263
	9.....	x	92, 104
9	3.....	x	269
	20.....	x	32
10	15.....	xi	305
	15, 16.....	xii	239, 241
	17.....	x	100
	20.....	x	330
11	2-7.....	ix	159
	14.....	vi	177
12	2.....	vi	99
	32.....	ix	186
13	1.....	ix	221
14	2.....	vi	263

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
14	2.....	xi	305
16	21.....	vi	99
17	6.....	vii	25, 27
	8-13.....	ix	154
	18.....	ix	152, 186
		xii	335
18	12.....	xi	32
	15.....	viii	499
21	22, 23.....	xi	37
22	15.....	vi	68
23	15, 16.....	xii	111
24	14.....	vi	95
27	26.....	vi	83
28	1, &c.....	vi	90
	25.....	vi	91
	43.....	ix	258
		xii	326
	49, 50.....	vi	92
		ix	258
		xii	326
	53-57.....	vi	92, 93
	63.....	x	93
	64.....	ix	257
		xii	326
	68.....	ix	259
29	10-13.....	iii	79
	20.....	viii	483
	29.....	iii	319
30	6.....	v	167, 169
		xii	239
	12.....	x	152
31	9-13.....	ix	186
	24-26.....	ix	152
		xii	335
	26.....	iv	171
		ix	186
	29.....	vi	161
		ix	255
		xii	326
32	4.....	ix	368
		x	97
	17.....	vii	346
	31.....	iv	23
	43.....	x	271, 323
33	3.....	iii	299
	25.....	iii	251
	29.....	iv	19, 23
		vi	97
		viii	393

## JOSHUA.

3	5.....	ix	157
---	--------	----	-----

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
3	14, &c.....	vi	101
4	6.....	ix	156
	18, &c.....	ix	157
7	1, &c.....	vi	102
	24.....	x	448
8	34, 35.....	ix	186
10	12-14.....	vi	102
18	1.....	vi	103
22	20.....	vi	102
24	15.....	iv	448

### JUDGES.

6	24.....	x	191
7	2.....	iv	218
13	22.....	iii	208
16	15.....	xii	19

### RUTH.

1	16.....	iii	185
---	---------	-----	-----

### 1 SAMUEL.

2	24.....	iii	388
	30.....	xi	465
3	13.....	iv	502
	21.....	x	268
8	1-9.....	vi	103
10	10.....	vi	105
12	1, &c.....	vi	274
13	14.....	vi	112
		ix	310
15	29.....	iii	356
		x	104
16	14.....	vi	109
18	10.....	vi	109
19	9.....	vi	109
	20-24.....	vi	104
20	6.....	xii	68
27	1.....	iii	422
		iv	330
28	6.....	vi	109, 110
	7-20.....	vi	110
29	4.....	xi	49
30	6.....	iii	452

### 2 SAMUEL.

6	20.....	iv	501
---	---------	----	-----

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
7	14.....	vi	307
	21.....	x	268
8	1, &c.....	ix	273
9	10.....	xii	111
11	11.....	xii	19
12	10.....	vi	113
	31.....	ix	331
		xii	365
14	14.....	viii	385, 455
18	33.....	iv	20
		xi	30
19	19.....	xi	200
23	1-4.....	viii	500
	3.....	vi	358
	3, 4.....	xii	153
	5.....	viii	495
24	1, &c.....	vi	113
	14.....	iii	452
	20-25.....	ii	398

### 1 KINGS.

2	5, 6.....	vi	114
8	9.....	iv	171
	11.....	iii	381
	27.....	iii	299
		ix	502
	39.....	x	294
	41-43.....	iii	459
9	20-22.....	vi	94
11	2.....	x	212
14	23.....	vi	99
18	24.....	x	270
	26.....	iv	166

### 2 KINGS.

2	12.....	iv	20
3	11.....	xii	272
4	1.....	vi	94
5	7.....	iii	327
	27.....	x	448
6	4.....	xii	278
	28, 29.....	vi	93
8	13.....	iv	10
9	5.....	i	156
10	4.....	xii	19
	15.....	iii	148
16	4.....	vi	99
17	26.....	ix	187
	33.....	vi	116
18	4.....	ix	153



Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
20	18.....	x	232
22	20.....	viii	205
25	5.....	ix	276

## 1 CHRONICLES.

2	7.....	vi	102
16	24.....	ix	498
	27.....	ix	498
	28.....	ix	498
	36.....	x	217
17	19.....	x	268
18	1, &c.....	ix	273
20	3.....	ix	331
22	8.....	ii	465
23	4.....	ix	154
29	11.....	x	108
	14-18.....	ii	334

## 2 CHRONICLES.

6	29.....	ii	469
	29-31.....	iii	145
	32, 33.....	ii	338
	40, 41.....	i	192
		ii	464
		iv	184
16	9.....	ii	208
21	11.....	vi	133
28	15.....	ix	275
36	15-17.....	vi	107
	19.....	ix	276
	23.....	ix	43

## EZRA.

1	2.....	ix	42, 55
	2, 3.....	viii	454
	8.....	ix	254

## NEHEMIAH.

1	4.....	viii	484
2	4.....	viii	484
8	1-5.....	ix	186
	8.....	iv	510
9	5.....	x	108

## JOB.

1	4, 5.....	iv	502
	10.....	iv	27

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
2	4.....	iii	138
4	18.....	viii	550
5	7.....	x	467
7	17.....	ii	65
	18.....	iv	380
	19.....	viii	392
9	2.....	iii	235
		xii	19
	5-7.....	ix	496
	8-10.....	ix	495
	10.....	x	50
10	4.....	iv	499
	12.....	viii	413
	22.....	viii	42
11	7.....	viii	465
		x	108
	8.....	iii	301
	12.....	x	466
	13-15.....	iv	496
13	15.....	xi	241
	22.....	iii	434
14	4.....	viii	331
		ix	297
		x	467
	7-13.....	viii	43
	12.....	ii	385, 391
	14.....	iii	12
15	14.....	x	405, 467
	16.....	x	471
19	23, 24.....	vi	163
	26.....	iv	15
20	4.....	x	390, 404
	5.....	x	404
21	12.....	iii	434
22	2.....	x	99
	21.....	viii	381
23	3.....	viii	392
	6.....	ii	78
	9.....	x	108
	10.....	viii	330
	11, 12.....	iii	18
24	12.....	xi	200
26	6.....	viii	290
		x	4
	7-10.....	ix	495
	11.....	ix	496
	14.....	ix	367, 499
		x	50
28	20.....	iv	462
	24-26.....	ix	496
		x	50
29	23.....	vi	177
31	33.....	x	405
32	8.....	ii	67, 241

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
32	8	viii	415
33	4, . . . . .	x	363
	22, . . . . .	ii	23
	29, . . . . .	ii	77
	29, 30, . . . .	xi	169
34	11, 12, . . . .	x	99
	19, . . . . .	x	100
	29, . . . . .	ii	206
		iii	191, 302
	33, . . . . .	iv	359
35	11, . . . . .	ii	67, 241
37	23, . . . . .	ix	367
38	7, . . . . .	viii	327
		ix	349
	10, . . . . .	ix	496
	22, 23, . . . .	iv	252
40	4, . . . . .	iii	429, 481
42	2, . . . . .	iii	424
	5, . . . . .	viii	517
	8, . . . . .	xi	99, 120

PSALMS.

Ps.			
1	2, . . . . .	ii	259
2	2, 3, . . . . .	ii	307
	3, . . . . .	iii	236
	4, . . . . .	vii	252
	6, . . . . .	iii	234, 285
	6-8, . . . . .	iii	478
	7, . . . . .	vi	307
		vii	42
		x	225
	8, . . . . .	ii	363
	12, . . . . .	iv	86
		vii	40
		viii	411
		x	225, 335
3	4-6, . . . . .	iv	27
4	6, . . . . .	viii	509
7	9, . . . . .	iii	20
	11, . . . . .	iii	356
8	1, 2, . . . . .	iii	174
	3, . . . . .	ii	65, 256, 291
	4, . . . . .	viii	521
		ix	337
		vi	308
9	16, . . . . .	xi	351
11	7, . . . . .	iv	500
		x	35, 96
12	1, . . . . .	ii	313
		iii	8, 272
		vii	454
	6, . . . . .	i	116

Ps.	Verse	Vol.	Page
13	6, . . . . .	iii	453
14	2, 3, . . . . .	x	469
	5, . . . . .	x	469
16	2, . . . . .	x	99
	3, . . . . .	viii	410
	4, . . . . .	ii	337
	5, . . . . .	viii	411
	7, . . . . .	viii	382
	8, . . . . .	iv	371
		viii	381
	10, . . . . .	viii	288, 317
		x	229
	11, . . . . .	viii	445
18	30, . . . . .	x	268
19	1, . . . . .	ii	256
		ix	379, 495
	2, . . . . .	x	50
	8, 9, . . . . .	xi	7
22	4, . . . . .	xi	216
	5, . . . . .	xii	49
	18, . . . . .	iii	396
	23, . . . . .	x	96
	28, . . . . .	ix	496
23	1-3, . . . . .	viii	533
	4, . . . . .	viii	534
24	1, . . . . .	ix	367
	3, . . . . .	viii	386
	7-10, . . . . .	ii	304
25	10, . . . . .	iv	380
		x	104
	14, . . . . .	ii	257
		vi	198
		viii	504
26	5, . . . . .	x	43
27	1, . . . . .	iii	451
		ix	498
	4, . . . . .	iii	186
		iv	169, 490
		viii	509
	14, . . . . .	xii	50
28	1, . . . . .	viii	205
32	1, . . . . .	iii	389
		xi	192
33	6, . . . . .	x	363
	9, . . . . .	ix	495
		x	46
	11, . . . . .	iii	298
		x	40
	13-15, . . . .	iii	299
	18, . . . . .	iii	263, 299
34	8, . . . . .	xi	292
	15, . . . . .	x	7
36	6, . . . . .	x	40
	9, . . . . .	ix	367

Ps.	Verse	Vol.	Page	Ps.	Verse	Vol.	Page
37	23.....	iii	10	66	18.....	ii	468
38	9.....	xi	33	68	5.....	ii	77
40	1-3.....	iv	525			iii	474
	6.....	vi	89		16.....	x	180
	7.....	ii	294		17, 18.....	ii	304
	8.....	iv	312			iii	129
	12.....	iii	429		18.....	iv	75
41	4.....	viii	494			viii	296, 300, &c.
	13.....	x	217		24.....	x	184
42	1.....	iii	150	71	3.....	iv	27
		viii	509	72	1, &c.....	vi	160
	2.....	iv	15		4.....	viii	404
	9.....	iv	25		5.....	x	326
43	4.....	iii	141		6.....	ii	97
45	1, &c.....	x	211			viii	406
	6.....	x	209		7.....	viii	407
	6, 7.....	vi	309		8.....	iv	246
		x	251		11.....	x	326
	11.....	iii	207		12.....	iii	299
46	1.....	viii	344		15.....	x	326
		xii	49		18, 19. . .	ii	316
	1-2.....	iii	406, 452			iii	482
		iv	270			viii	398
	4.....	iv	39			x	108
48	2.....	xi	309	73	1, &c. . .	iii	454
	12.....	iii	285		11.....	xii	19
49	8.....	iii	223		13.....	iii	147
50	8-14. . .	iii	367		25.....	ii	397
	15.....	ii	203, 205			iii	130, 150
		iii	244			iv	494
	21.....	iii	363			xii	46
	23.....	viii	327		26.....	iv	537
51	1.....	x	92			viii	509
	5.....	ix	285		28.....	iii	147
		x	468			iv	15
	6.....	vi	314	75	7.....	ix	496
	10.....	viii	386	76	10.....	vii	252
		xi	230	77	16.....	ii	228
	11.....	iv	411	80	1.....	iv	184
		viii	464		11.....	ii	313
	12.....	iv	297		14.....	viii	209
56	3.....	iii	452	82	1.....	x	201
		ix	498		6.....	x	201
57	10.....	x	104	83	18.....	x	190
58	3, 4.....	x	468	84	1.....	iii	145
61	2.....	iii	452			iv	490
	9.....	xi	384		10.....	ii	476
63	1, 2.....	iii	145			iv	16
	2.....	iii	186		11.....	ii	377
65	2.....	ii	434			iii	451
		iii	476			iv	26
	4.....	iii	145	85	1.....	ii	30
		iv	16		10.....	xi	81
	11.....	iv	520	86	8.....	ix	495

Ps.	Verse	Vol.	Page
86	10.....	ix	461
87	3.....	iii	286
	7.....	iv	26
88	10-12....	viii	42
	12.....	viii	291
	18.....	iii	434
89	1, &c....	viii	496
	18.....	x	96
	27.....	iv	246
	52.....	x	217
90	2.....	ix	367, 486
		x	201
	8.....	iii	368, 389
	16.....	viii	347
91	1.....	ii	265
	5.....	ii	204
94	7.....	ii	400
	8-10....	x	4
	10.....	x	35
	19.....	iii	141
97	1.....	iv	239
	1, &c....	x	324
	2.....	ix	368
		x	108
	7.....	x	323
	12.....	vii	15
		x	247
98	8.....	iv	215
	9.....	x	232
100	3.....	x	137
101	5-7.....	xii	154
102	14.....	vii	347
	25, 26....	viii	383
	25-27....	ix	486
		x	40, 196
103	4.....	x	92
	13.....	x	92
	14.....	iii	423
	16.....	viii	503
104	4.....	ix	496
	24.....	iii	300
		viii	466
		x	49, 52
	27-30....	x	364
	28.....	viii	466
	30.....	viii	466
106	1.....	x	40
	30, 31....	xi	199
107	1, &c....	ii	77
	43.....	x	93
108	4.....	x	92
110	1.....	vi	234, 307
		x	270, 273
	3.....	i	125

Ps.	Verse	Vol.	Page
110	4.....	vi	90, 309
111	10.....	iv	462
113	5, 6.....	iv	225
116	6.....	iii	343
	7.....	iii	130, 449
	12.....	iv	494
118	15.....	ii	469
119	18.....	iv	169
	32.....	xi	249
	97.....	iii	304
	111.....	iii	304
	120.....	xi	42
	136.....	iii	272
	152.....	viii	486
	164.....	iii	437
121	4.....	viii	534
		x	7
122	6.....	xii	54
	7, 8.....	ii	470
		iii	153
124	8.....	ix	498
125	1.....	viii	392
	2.....	iv	40
130	1.....	iv	229
	1, &c....	v	53
	8.....	v	168
132	4, 5.....	ii	465
	14.....	ii	218
		iii	167, 276
134	2.....	ii	39
137	5.....	iii	153
138	8.....	ix	368
139	1-4.....	x	3
	2.....	x	16
	3.....	iii	299
	6.....	x	16
	7.....	iv	484
	7-10....	ix	501
	18.....	iv	494
143	2.....	iv	314
		viii	474, 509
	7.....	viii	205
	7, 8.....	viii	474
	10.....	i	582
		viii	464
144	5.....	ix	497
145	1.....	ii	256
	2.....	viii	417
	4, 5.....	vii	15
		x	247
	9.....	ix	368
		x	92
		xi	350
11.....	•••••	ii	370

Ps.	Verse	Vol.	Page
146	6.....x	104	
	8.....x	43	
147	4.....ii	287	
	5.....x	4	

## PROVERBS.

Chap.			
1	12.....viii	205	
	20.....iii	267	
	24.....xi	17	
	28.....xi	17	
2	10-22....iv	463	
3	6.....ii	203	
	iii	10, 244	
	xii	69	
4	7.....iv	462	
	18.....iii	261	
	viii	524	
	23.....iii	154	
5	21.....x	4	
6	27.....iii	296	
8	15.....viii	354	
	22.....x	230	
9	10.....x	137	
12	6.....x	392	
14	9.....ii	403	
	32.....viii	367	
	34.....ii	250	
15	11.....viii	291	
16	4.....xi	390, 480	
	5.....xi	390	
	15.....vi	177	
	33.....ii	29	
	iii	32	
18	13.....vi	533	
19	21.....ii	296	
20	6.....x	392	
	28.....xii	154	
21	30.....iii	301	
	ix	345	
22	15.....ii	60	
	x	468	
24	24.....xii	154	
28	14.....iii	30	
29	1.....iii	474	
	15.....x	468	
30	4.....x	152, 234	

## ECCLESIASTES.

5	8.....x	137
7	14.....iv	202

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
7	14.....xi	169	
	29.....iii	352	
	x	84, 389	
8	11.....iii	363	
9	3.....iv	387	
	x	471	
	5.....ii	260	
	10.....ii	357	
	viii	42	
11	1-6.....ii	352	
12	1.....x	137	
	5.....viii	205	

## ISAIAH.

1	1.....ix	268
	2.....ii	307
	5.....iii	352
	12.....xi	164
	13.....iv	499
	18.....iii	367
	19, 20....xi	465
	21.....vi	138
2	2, 3.....ii	335
	2-4.....iii	270
	3.....ii	308
4	3.....x	229
	5.....vi	136
5	3.....ix	139
	x	35
	13.....vi	139
6	1, &c....vi	140
	1-7.....iv	143
	x	181
	3.....ix	368
	x	96, 141, 366
	5.....iii	208
	vi	345
	viii	391
	x	316
	8.....vi	21
	x	141
	10.....xi	392
	12, 13 ...vii	454
7	1.....ix	274
	14.....vii	36
	x	203
8	8.....x	203
9	2-7.....iv	206
	6.....x	204, 289
	6, 7.....x	179
	7.....viii	401
10	7.....viii	408

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
11	1.....	iii	124
	2.....	viii	403, 469
	4.....	vi	303
12	1.....	iv	296
	3.....	vi	200
	6.....	iii	285
13	1, &c.....	vi	141, 156
	21.....	ix	260
		xii	328
14	4-32 ....	vi	142
	9.....	viii	289
	9-11 ....	viii	293, 442
	10.....	iii	429
	12.....	vi	137
	13, 14 ....	vi	301
	15.....	viii	205
	18.....	viii	205
17	11.....	viii	427, 449
19	19.....	vi	125
24	16.....	iv	215
25	7.....	viii	411
26	3.....	vi	356
	4.....	viii	344
	9.....	iii	279
		x	103
	11.....	ii	35
		iii	279
		iv	268
	12.....	ii	20
	19.....	ii	385
		iii	52, 434
27	5.....	iv	371
29	3, 4.....	vi	205
	21.....	vi	68
30	18.....	x	92
	21.....	viii	471
	26.....	ii	315
		iv	215
32	15.....	ii	367
		iii	276
33	6.....	iv	458
34	16.....	x	143, 366
35	2.....	vi	136
	5.....	iv	5
	8.....	viii	504
36	2.....	xii	278
38	10, 11 ....	viii	42
	18.....	viii	42
40	1.....	iii	99, 214, 340
		v	55
		viii	402
	3.....	x	194
	3-5.....	ii	310
		iv	307, 472, 481

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
40	3-5.....	x	179
	6.....	ii	434
		iii	109
	9.....	ii	311
	11.....	vi	138
		viii	531, 534
	12.....	iii	241
		ix	496
	15.....	ix	496
	17.....	ix	496
	22.....	ix	496
	23.....	ix	496
	25, 26 ....	ix	223
	31.....	viii	533
41	4.....	ix	486
	8.....	iv	297
	16.....	vi	137
	23.....	ix	224
42	1.....	viii	403
	2.....	ii	223
	8.....	x	190
	16.....	iii	343
43	10.....	x	289
	16, &c.....	vi	137
	25.....	iii	389
44	1.....	vi	263
	3.....	vi	135
	20.....	iii	466
	22.....	iii	389
	26-28 ....	viii	483
	28.....	vi	156
45	1-4.....	vi	156
		viii	479
	5.....	ix	54
		x	190
	5, 6.....	viii	481
	6.....	x	289
	7.....	ii	33
		viii	478
	9.....	iii	150, 454
	12.....	x	390
	15.....	iv	379
	17.....	x	270
	22.....	viii	385
	24.....	iv	379
		x	193
46	5.....	x	300
	9, 10 ....	ix	241
		x	300
	10.....	iii	302
47	1, 2.....	vi	138
48	16.....	x	142, 366
	22.....	iv	216
49	14.....	iv	20

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page	Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
49	16.....	iii	212, 481	3	3.....	vi	177
	20.....	i	119	4	4.....	xii	239
50	10.....	xi	241		7.....	vi	136
53	2.....	ix	264		23.....	vi	137
	3.....	viii	406	5	22.....	ix	497
		ix	264		24.....	vi	177
	4.....	ix	264	6	6.....	vi	205
	5.....	iii	394	8	8.....	xii	19
		iv	115, 175		9.....	vi	61
		xi	33, 34	10	11.....	ii	478
	5-10 ....	iv	278		25.....	xii	68
	6.....	viii	419, 532	17	5.....	ii	133
		xi	35, 279, 284			x	226
	7.....	ii	227		7.....	xi	241
		iii	310, 396		9.....	ii	66
		viii	544			viii	506
		xi	35		9, 10.....	ix	225
	10.....	viii	431, 545	18	6.....	vi	261
	11.....	xi	34		6-10.....	xi	318
	12.....	ix	264		7, 8.....	xi	394
		xi	34		7-10.....	iv	138
54	10.....	x	41	19	1, &c.....	vi	261
55	1.....	viii	489			xi	324
	6, 7 .....	v	255		10, 11.....	xi	325
		vi	133	20	9.....	x	43
		viii	477		15.....	x	470
57	2.....	iii	9	22	22.....	vi	135
		viii	205	23	5, 6.....	x	191
	3.....	vi	138		6.....	xi	193
	15.....	iii	473		20.....	vi	161
		viii	384, 490		23.....	ix	501
		xi	259		24.....	iv	484
	21.....	ii	206			ix	367, 501
59	9.....	vi	135	27	5.....	x	390
60	18.....	viii	406	29	14.....	x	271
	19, 20 ....	iii	476	30	24.....	vi	161
61	10.....	vi	136	31	31.....	x	173
63	1.....	ii	295		34.....	xi	266
	9.....	x	166	33	16.....	x	191
	10.....	x	492			xi	193
	15.....	x	92	34	2.....	ix	275
65	8.....	vii	456		10.....	ix	275
66	1.....	ix	501	35	19.....	vi	157
				44	4.....	x	130
				46	3-11 ....	vi	145
				47	7.....	xii	19
				48	1, &c.....	vi	146
					37.....	vi	138
					47.....	vi	161
				49	11.....	iii	251
					39.....	vi	161
				50	7.....	x	41
				52	11.....	ix	276

## JEREMIAH.

1	8.....	x	270
2	13.....	viii	448
		xii	58
	19.....	iii	365
	20.....	vi	138
	31.....	viii	487
3	1.....	vi	138

LAMENTATIONS.

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
2	1, &c.....	vi	149
	1-15.....	iv	8
3	22.....	x	93
	24.....	iv	455
	33-35.....	iv	54
4	10.....	vi	93
	16.....	x	232
5	7.....	xi	34

EZEKIEL.

1	1.....	iv	256
	4.....	vi	150
	15-18.....	iii	159
16	10.....	vi	136
	15.....	vi	138
	63.....	viii	391
17	3.....	vi	136
18	20.....	xi	34, 86
	26.....	x	43
	29.....	ix	139
		x	35
		xi	351
23	3.....	vi	138
	33.....	vi	138
26	1, &c.....	vi	151
28	2.....	x	200
	2-6.....	vi	301
	2-9.....	x	200
	14.....	vi	137
29	11.....	ix	277
	15.....	vii	339
		ix	279
30	13.....	ix	279
	14.....	vii	339
	18.....	vii	339
32	1, &c.....	vi	153
	7.....	vi	135
	23.....	viii	205
33	10.....	xii	19
	11.....	xi	301, 347, 350
36	25.....	vi	136
	25-29.....	v	167, 169
	29.....	v	169
37	1-14.....	vi	137
	9.....	i	136-139
		ii	1-19
38	8-16.....	vi	161
	22.....	vi	135
44	27.....	xi	38
45	19.....	xi	38

DANIEL.

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
2	11.....	x	198
	28.....	vi	161
	44.....	iii	192
3	23.....	ii	422
	29.....	viii	482
		ix	55
4	17.....	x	137
		xii	237
	33.....	xii	272
	35.....	x	48
	37.....	viii	482
5	21.....	iv	244
	26-28.....	viii	441, 482
	27.....	iii	295
7	25.....	ii	313
8	25.....	vi	301
9	3.....	iii	385
	11.....	vi	80
	24.....	iii	385
	25.....	vi	167
	26.....	iii	389
		iv	115
	27.....	vi	207, 209
10	14.....	vi	161
11	36.....	vi	301
12	2.....	xii	17
	13.....	iii	8, 17

HOSEA.

1	2.....	vi	138
3	5.....	vi	161
4	6.....	ii	239
	9.....	x	271
6	3.....	vi	177
	4.....	iv	100
		x	492
	7.....	x	471
11	8.....	x	92
12	3-5.....	x	164
	5.....	x	190
13	14.....	ii	391

JOEL.

2	13.....	iv	499
	17.....	iii	21
		viii	369
	23.....	vi	177
	32.....	x	195, 322



## . AMOS.

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
4	1.....vi	136	
7	1.....vi	177	
9	2, 3.....ix	502	

## JONAH.

4	2.....x	91
---	---------	----

## MICAH.

1	3, 4.....vi	137
3	12.....vi	205, 209
4	13.....vi	137
5	2.....x	23
	2-4.....viii	526
6	7.....iii	495
	8.....iii	293
7	18.....x	72, 92
	19.....iii	389

## HABAKKUK.

1	13.....ix	368
	x	96
2	3.....iii	303
3	2.....viii	347

## HAGGAI.

2	4-7.....x	143, 366
	6.....iii	401
	9.....vi	120

## ZECHARIAH.

1	5.....viii	352
2	13.....iii	471
4	7.....iv	413
	viii	411
	10.....ii	208
6	12, 13 ....iii	121
8	19.....ix	349
9	9-12 ....i	564
	iii	163
	x	176

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
10	1.....vi	177	
	xii	54	
12	11.....x	125	
13	1.....iii	375	
	7.....iv	115	
14	7.....vi	327	

## MALACHI.

1	2, 3.....xi	313
	3.....vi	203, 261
	4.....xi	333
	6.....vii	73
	x	137
2	7.....ii	471
	iii	98
	iv	510
	14, 15 ....xii	130
3	1.....vi	179
	x	174
	6.....x	40
	7.....iii	387
4	2.....iv	459
	6.....vi	177

## 2 ESDRAS.

3	4-7.....x	412
7	48.....x	412

## WISDOM.

2	23.....x	388
	24.....x	412
10	1.....x	401, 412
13	5.....ix	379

## ECCLESIASTICUS.

17	1, &c ....x	412
43	30.....iv	149

## BARUCH.

3	29.....x	153
---	----------	-----

2 MACCABEES.

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
3	33.....	xi	39

ST. MATTHEW.

1	21.....	iv	500
		viii	433
	22, 23 ....	x	179
	23.....	ii	214
		iii	240
		ix	261
		x	202
2	1-11 ....	vi	220
	2.....	viii	526
	18.....	iii	75
	22.....	xi	30
3	2.....	iv	309, 474
	3.....	iii	340
		x	194
	5, 6.....	vi	218
		xi	21
	6.....	iv	313
		vi	218
	7.....	iii	450
		iv	479
	8.....	xi	230
	8, 9.....	iv	474
	9, 10 ....	iv	87, 479
	11.....	iv	411, 475
		xii	274
	12.....	ii	382
		iv	475
	15.....	iii	390
		xi	180
	16.....	xii	275, 278
	16, 17 ....	x	236
	17.....	x	171, 238
4	1.....	iv	32
	1-11 ....	vi	187
	3.....	iv	35
	4.....	iv	36
	6.....	iv	37
	7.....	iv	37
	9.....	viii	441
		ix	223
	10.....	x	330
5	1.....	xii	278
	1, &c.....	vi	183
	3.....	vi	345
	8.....	x	108

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
5	13.....	vi	358
		viii	329
		xi	310
	14.....	vi	358
		xi	310
	16.....	iii	20
	17.....	viii	57, 136
		xii	29
	19.....	xii	29
	23, 24 ....	xi	49
	38, 39 ....	viii	529
	39.....	ix	170
	48.....	v	170
		viii	395
6	1, &c.....	vi	183
	6.....	iii	436
		xii	64
	9.....	xii	75
	10.....	iii	189
	19, 20 ....	viii	512
	22, 23 ....	viii	512
	24.....	ix	170
	25.....	xi	121
	28.....	ix	170
	30.....	x	54
	31.....	ii	204
		vi	344
7	1, &c.....	vi	183
	4.....	xii	19
	6.....	vii	322
	7.....	iii	145
		xii	53
	8.....	iii	343
	11.....	x	471
	12.....	ii	445
	16.....	iv	387
	22.....	iv	100
		xi	216
	29.....	viii	529
8	2.....	x	315
	5.....	vi	192
	9.....	vi	225
	10.....	xi	217
	11.....	viii	291
	20.....	iv	450
	28.....	vi	193
	29.....	ii	227
		viii	318
9	2.....	vi	190
		xi	242
	11.....	vi	190
	12.....	iv	313
	13.....	viii	57
	18.....	vi	189

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page	Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
9	32, 33	vi	193	15	19	ii	60
	34	ii	224		22	vi	193
	36	ii	228		24	viii	531
	36, 38	vi	194		25	ii	233
	38	ii	369			iv	229
		iii	205		32	ii	228
		viii	367	16	1	vi	195
10	19, 20	vi	12		16	iii	106
	20	x	361			vi	228
	22	iii	5		16, 17	x	222
10	29	ix	368		17	iii	397
	30	iii	244, 299			xi	380
	31	iii	244		18	vi	197
	37	iii	5		19	iii	94
11	5	ii	329			vi	228
		iv	236		21-23	xi	27
		viii	404, 436		23	x	471
	10	vi	179		24	iii	4, 255
	21	x	9		26	iii	216
	25	ii	327			viii	441
		iii	101, 253		27	v	234
		iv	463	17	1, 2	iii	85
	26	iii	328			vi	198, 229
	27	iii	151		4	ii	265, 391, 437
		iv	35			iii	186
		x	358		14-21	vi	193
	28	iii	425, 494		15	ii	229, 230
		iv	298		24	ii	230
		viii	405		24-27	vi	198
	28, 29	xi	259	18	3	iv	285
	30	iii	253		3-14	iii	81
12	1-13	vi	223			vi	24
	19	iv	450		11	viii	532
	21	xi	217			xi	28
	22-24	vi	193, 226		12, 13	vi	24
	25	x	295		15-18	xii	208
	26	xii	19		17	xii	168
	31	vi	226, 311		18	xii	206, 207
		viii	437		19	ii	469
		x	374			iii	477
	36, 37	xi	241			vi	189
	38	vi	195		20	ii	273
13	21, 22	xi	293			iii	184
	25	vi	182			vi	189
	28	x	59			x	292
	39	iii	33			xii	69
	41, 42	ii	292		23-35	vi	199
14	13	vi	195, 227	19	1, &c	xii	129
	31	iii	421		4	x	390
	33	vii	20		4, 5	x	406
		x	316		5	xii	129
15	4-6	xii	138		13-15	vi	204
	9	iii	142		14	vi	217
		xi	164		17-19	xii	30

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page	Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
19	24.....	ix	170	23	37.....	vii	252
	26.....	x	205			viii	529
20	13.....	x	103			xi	278, 350
	15.....	vi	260	24	2.....	vi	205, 209
		x	103		3-35.....	vi	207
	15, 16....	xi	381		13.....	xi	376
	16.....	iii	267		14.....	iii	233
		vi	263		15-28....	vi	207
	19.....	vi	205		24.....	ix	221, 226
	23.....	x	298		30.....	viii	530
	28.....	xi	23, 29, 52, 114		35.....	iii	356
21	1-11.....	vi	205			vi	207
	5-11.....	x	175, &c.		36.....	x	296
	9.....	iii	163		37.....	x	300
	12, 13....	vi	188		39.....	x	300
	13.....	ii	226		43.....	vi	204
		vi	188		50, 51....	iii	22
		x	178	25	1-12....	vi	182
	15, 16....	iii	174		1-13....	iv	97
	19.....	vi	194, 233		11.....	iii	26
	22.....	iii	145			viii	423
		xii	10		24.....	x	98
	23.....	ix	99		41.....	viii	548
	28.....	iii	204			xi	37
	35.....	viii	430	26	6-13....	vi	192
	38.....	x	219		11.....	ii	444
22	1-14.....	xi	366			iv	340
	2-10.....	vi	230			x	300
	11.....	vi	206		12.....	vi	235
	12.....	viii	455		17.....	vi	235
	13.....	vi	183		18.....	vi	235
	14.....	vi	263		23.....	xii	272
		viii	455		26.....	vi	210
		xi	346, 358, 366		26-28....	vi	210
	16.....	vi	190			xii	296
	21.....	xii	154		27, 23....	iv	280
	30.....	xii	22			xii	287
	32.....	iii	283		28.....	xi	61, 106
	37.....	iii	235		30.....	vi	212
		iv	171		38.....	viii	545
		v	170			x	347
		vi	31, 256		39.....	iv	351
		x	127			ix	169
	37-39....	vi	31, 256		40.....	ii	387
	39.....	iii	6		42.....	xi	197
		vi	31, 256		52.....	viii	405
	40.....	x	384		59, 60....	vii	25
	41-46....	ii	302		65.....	vii	26
	42.....	vii	38		65, 66....	vii	24
	45, 46....	vi	234	27	19.....	iv	312
23	4.....	iii	253		24.....	iii	394
	32.....	vi	210			viii	542
	33.....	xii	19		25.....	x	447
					39-44....	x	220

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
27	45.....	vi	213
	46.....	iii	359
		iv	115
		viii	432
		x	347
	53.....	viii	546
	54.....	x	220
	55, 56.....	vi	192
	62-66.....	vi	239
28	1, &c.....	vi	215
	6.....	iii	392
	11-15.....	vi	214
	13.....	ix	210
	16.....	xi	388
	18.....	iv	246
		x	347
	18-20.....	ii	295, 363
		xii	231
	19.....	vi	277
		vii	12
		x	143, 368
		xii	222
	20.....	ii	273
		iii	382
		iv	412
		v	89
		ix	162
		x	292, 300
		xii	340

## MARK.

1	1, 2.....	x	175
	5.....	vi	218
	12, 13.....	vi	187
	41.....	ii	231
2	5.....	vi	190
	5-11.....	x	314
	7.....	vii	34
	9.....	ii	226
		iii	6
		viii	536
	16.....	vi	190
	27.....	viii	137
3	5.....	xi	350
	6.....	vi	190
	28, 29.....	vi	226, 311
4	40.....	xii	19
5	1, &c.....	vi	193
	22.....	vi	189
6	32.....	vi	195, 227
	34.....	vi	194
7	37.....	viii	462

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
8	11.....	vi	195
	27.....	vi	228
9	2, &c.....	vi	229
	2-10.....	vi	198
	24.....	ii	232
	36, 37.....	ii	41
	44.....	viii	447
10	13-15.....	ii	42
		iii	80
	13-16.....	vi	204
	14.....	vi	217
	14, 15.....	xii	253
	15.....	vii	225
	16.....	x	456
	45.....	xi	30
11	1-10.....	vi	205
	13, &c.....	vi	194, 233
	15-17.....	vi	188
	22.....	xi	216
	25, 26.....	vi	199
12	13.....	vi	190
	30, 31.....	vi	31, 256
13	2.....	vi	205, 209
	14.....	vi	207
	26.....	x	300
	32.....	vii	44
		x	296, 299
	34.....	x	300
	35.....	iv	268
14	3-9.....	vi	192
	22-24.....	vi	210
	26.....	vi	212
	34.....	iii	359
	55, 56.....	vii	25
15	25.....	vi	213
	39.....	iii	118
	40, 41.....	vi	192
16	1, &c.....	vi	215
	15.....	iii	457
		viii	536
		xi	281
	15, 16.....	xi	277, 348
		xii	232
	16.....	iii	235
		vi	217
		x	120
		xi	215, 297, 465
	17.....	x	313

## LUKE.

1	1-4.....	vi	170
	16, 17.....	x	195, 204.

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
1	31-33. ....	x	179
	32. ....	viii	501
	34. ....	xii	19
	35. ....	iii	247, 394
		vii	7, 44
		x	254
	65, 66. ....	iv	474
	68. ....	x	217
	69. ....	v	170
	76-79. ....	iv	473
	78, 79. ....	iv	431
		vi	264
	79. ....	iv	208
2	10, 11. ....	iv	216
	32. ....	iv	208
		xi	307
	34. ....	iv	318
	38. ....	vi	220
	46, 47. ....	vi	221
	51. ....	vii	37
	52. ....	viii	469
		x	298
3	11. ....	iv	475
	13. ....	iv	475
	14. ....	iv	475
	23. ....	i	155
		vii	37
	1-13. ....	vi	187
	13. ....	ii	229
	17-20. ....	ix	188
	33-35. ....	vi	193
	39. ....	ii	226
5	8. ....	iii	208
		x	316
	10. ....	ii	230
	14. ....	iv	451
	17. ....	vii	34
	20. ....	vi	190
	30. ....	vi	190
6	1-11. ....	vi	223
	46. ....	iv	100
7	2, &c. ....	vi	192
	7. ....	ii	231
	8. ....	vi	225
		xi	388
	12. ....	x	240
	27. ....	vi	179
	36. ....	vi	192
	38. ....	vi	193
	44. ....	xii	272
	47. ....	xi	242
	48. ....	vi	190
		viii	536
	50. ....	viii	536

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
8	2, 3. ....	vi	192
	26-36. ....	vi	193
	41. ....	vi	195
	42. ....	x	240
9	1. ....	x	313
	10, &c. ....	vi	195
	28, &c. ....	vi	229
	28-36. ....	vi	198
	37-42. ....	vi	193
	38. ....	x	240
	47, 48. ....	xii	252
	52-56. ....	vi	179, 230
10	17, 18. ....	vi	230
	18. ....	ii	234
	19. ....	x	313
	20. ....	xi	389
	25-37. ....	iv	336
		vi	230
	27. ....	vi	31, 256
		x	382
	29. ....	iv	335
	31. ....	iv	163
11	2. ....	xii	75
	10. ....	viii	511
	11. ....	xi	30
	13. ....	iv	414
		vii	73
	14, 15. ....	vi	193, 226
	16. ....	vi	195
	18. ....	xii	19
	29. ....	vi	195
12	4. ....	ii	425, 443
	5. ....	ii	390
	7. ....	ii	204
		iii	244
		ix	368
		xii	13
	10. ....	vi	226, 311
	20. ....	iii	429
		iv	31
	32. ....	ii	313
		iii	283
		viii	532
	37. ....	iii	12
	39. ....	vi	204
	43-46. ....	iv	98
	48. ....	xii	108
13	10. ....	vi	189
	11-17. ....	vi	188
	23-25. ....	iii	265
14	5. ....	i	156
	16-24. ....	vi	230
	24. ....	iii	371
	26. ....	vi	203, 261

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
15	1, &c. ....	vi	230
	4-7. ....	ii	291
		vi	24
	10. ....	ii	377
	11-32. ....	iv	59
		vi	182
	18. ....	iii	150
	24. ....	viii	429
16	1, &c. ....	vi	230
	2. ....	iii	20
	8. ....	ii	263
	13. ....	x	205
	22, 23. ....	xii	16
	23. ....	viii	291
	26. ....	ii	361
	28. ....	viii	446
17	4. ....	ii	445
	5. ....	iv	373
		viii	507
	20. ....	vii	328
	21. ....	vii	349
	37. ....	vi	207
18	1. ....	iii	255
	3-8. ....	vi	204
	7. ....	xii	13
	9-14. ....	vi	346
	10. ....	vi	190
	13. ....	ii	78
		iii	143, 208
		iv	20, 290
		v	52
	13, 14. ....	xi	173
	15-17. ....	vi	204
	16. ....	vi	217
19	2. ....	vi	190
	10. ....	vii	219
	12. ....	iii	200
		vi	182
	13. ....	vi	359
	17. ....	iii	33
	26. ....	x	436
	28-38. ....	vi	205
	41-44. ....	vi	205, 209
	42. ....	iv	1
	45, 46. ....	vi	188
21	6. ....	vi	205, 209
	19. ....	viii	330
		x	69
	34. ....	iii	453
	36. ....	xii	53
22	19, 20. ....	vi	210
	32. ....	iii	20
	42. ....	iii	150, 359
	44. ....	viii	545

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
22	66-71. ....	vii	26
	70. ....	x	245
	71. ....	x	245
23	1-7. ....	vi	212
	2-5. ....	vii	24
	9. ....	vi	237
	13. ....	vi	189
	35. ....	vi	189
	36, 37. ....	x	220
	39. ....	x	220
	41. ....	iii	397
	42. ....	x	220
	43. ....	iii	28, 398
		viii	291
		xii	14
	44. ....	vi	213
	46. ....	x	319
		xii	16
	47, 48. ....	iii	392
24	1, &c. ....	vi	215
	39. ....	viii	49
		xii	16
	46. ....	xi	61
	46, 47. ....	xi	26
	47. ....	iv	451
		vi	217
	49. ....	iii	379
	51, 52. ....	x	318

## ST JOHN.

1	1. ....	ii	431
		vi	19, 203
		viii	64
		x	204, 266, 272
	2. ....	viii	64
	3. ....	x	204, 272, 304
	4. ....	iv	89
	5. ....	x	266
	6. ....	x	155
	7. ....	x	266
	10. ....	x	206
	11. ....	iv	1
		x	203, 219
	12. ....	iii	193
	12, 13. ....	xi	249
	13. ....	viii	56
	14. ....	ii	294, 431
		iii	391
		vi	203
		vii	7
		viii	384
		x	239, 266, 272

Chap. Verse	Vol.	Page
1 14.....	x	317
15.....	x	150, 266
17.....	iv	491
	viii	499
	x	266
18.....	iv	188
	vii	7, 48
	x	171, 205
23.....	iv	472
29.....	iii	144, 275, 390,
		495
	iv	476
	viii	541
	xi	22, 88, 106,
		275
30.....	x	150
32, 33.....	iv	475
34.....	x	236
44-51.....	vii	16
45.....	iii	310
	xi	379
46.....	x	222
47.....	xi	379
49.....	x	220
2 11.....	v	49
18.....	vi	195
	ix	99
19.....	ii	335
	x	248
24.....	x	295
3 1.....	vi	189
1, &c.....	x	471
2.....	iii	309
	viii	57
	ix	236
3.....	iv	407
	x	471
4.....	iv	407
5.....	iv	407
	x	375
	xi	171
	xii	232
5, 6.....	x	472
6.....	ii	305
	iii	134, 352
	iv	407
	vi	42
	viii	541
	x	483, 486
	xi	309
7.....	ii	135
	iv	408
8.....	viii	406
13.....	viii	431

Chap. Verse	Vol.	Page
3 13.....	x	151, 242, 291
14, 15.....	iv	117
	viii	428
15.....	iii	390
	xi	297
16.....	ii	309
	iii	50, 62, 219
	iv	226
	v	52
	vii	9
	viii	428
	x	260
	xi	218, 275, 280,
		282
17.....	x	149
	xi	301
17, 18.....	xi	282
18.....	xi	277
19.....	ii	243, 367
	iii	371
	vi	10
22, 23.....	xii	279
25-36.....	xi	22
26.....	xii	280
28-36.....	iv	477
30.....	xii	280
31.....	x	151, 156
35.....	x	237
36.....	viii	271
	xi	42, 277
4 1.....	xii	280
9.....	vi	116
14.....	ii	457
	iv	44
	vi	356
21-24.....	iv	188
22.....	ii	337
	iii	142
23.....	viii	530
24.....	iii	215
	iv	346, 482, 499
	ix	367, 470
	x	35
	xii	54
32.....	iii	22
34.....	iii	22
35.....	viii	339
39.....	vi	222
50.....	ii	229
53.....	xii	259
5 1, &c.....	vi	188, 223
17.....	x	242
18.....	vii	30
	x	222, 242, 260



Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page	Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
5	19.....	x	237, 301, 444	8	7.....	x	150
	21-23.....	x	238		12.....	ii	212
	22.....	iii	193			iii	386
		viii	388			iv	431
	23.....	x	335	20.....	vii	30	
	24.....	v	52	27.....	vii	34	
	26.....	vii	40	32.....	iv	402	
		x	238, 258, 262, 301, 444	33.....	ii	374	
	27.....	x	171	36.....	ii	374	
	37.....	x	237, 238	42.....	xi	383	
	37, 38.....	x	238	44.....	x	428	
	38.....	xi	379	51.....	i	621	
	39.....	xi	381	56.....	ii	258	
	40.....	iii	267		viii	497	
		xi	278, 379	58.....	vi	202	
	44.....	xi	379, 383		viii	528	
	46.....	iii	372		x	156	
		xi	379	9	4.....	viii	456
	47.....	xii	19		33.....	x	205
6	1, &c.....	vi	195		35.....	vii	21
	27.....	iii	306		35-38.....	x	316
	29.....	xi	215	10	5.....	xi	383
	31, 32.....	iii	313		10.....	ii	457
	33.....	x	151			viii	405
	33-35.....	iv	91		15.....	viii	534
	37.....	iii	398			xi	23, 283
		xi	378		16.....	viii	531
	38.....	xi	381			xi	284
	40.....	xi	380		17, 18.....	xi	197
	44.....	xi	380		18.....	viii	544
	45.....	xi	380			x	248
	46.....	x	155, 171			xi	84
	51.....	xi	106		22.....	vi	204
	53.....	xi	166		23-33.....	vii	31
	54, 55.....	xi	106		26.....	xi	383
	56.....	xii	294		27.....	xi	383
	57.....	ii	457		27, 28.....	viii	534
		x	262			x	244
	62.....	x	155		30.....	vi	231
	63.....	x	375			x	245, 358
	64.....	x	300		33.....	x	244, 260
	70.....	xi	384		34.....	x	202, 244
7	2.....	vi	200		35, 36.....	x	244
	15.....	iii	193		37, 38.....	x	245, 312
	22.....	xii	227		38.....	vi	231
	26.....	vi	189		39.....	x	312
	32.....	ii	436	11	2.....	vi	192
	37.....	vi	200		25.....	viii	498
	38.....	vi	200		35.....	iv	20
	46.....	ii	436		42.....	iv	324
	48.....	iii	39		43.....	ii	228, 229, 437
		vi	189		50.....	xi	30
8	1, &c.....	vii	30, 31	12	3, &c.....	vi	192
						viii	538

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
12	12-15.....	vi	205
	23, 24.....	xi	27
	24.....	iii	489
		vi	233
	25.....	vi	203, 261
	31.....	viii	540
	32.....	iv	117
		viii	538
	37-40.....	xi	390
	41.....	x	142
	42.....	vi	189
13	7.....	iii	106, 329
	8.....	iii	107
	10.....	xi	384
	11.....	x	300
	13, 14.....	iv	339
	14.....	iii	108
	17.....	iii	98
	18.....	xi	384
	23.....	vi	193
	34.....	viii	528
14	6.....	iii	351
		viii	494
	11.....	vii	20
	12.....	iii	380
	13.....	xi	217
	16.....	x	253
	17.....	vii	504
		x	253
	19.....	iii	345
		viii	513
	23.....	iv	316
		x	300
	26.....	viii	472
		x	253, 361
	27.....	viii	511
	28.....	x	358
15	5.....	ii	377
		iv	413
		viii	491
	13.....	iii	424
	16.....	xi	384
	18.....	x	150
	19.....	xi	281, 346, 359, 385
	22.....	ii	367
	26.....	x	143, 253, 313, 360
16	8.....	x	492
	12.....	vi	187, 255
	13.....	vi	12
		x	372, 375
	14.....	iii	382
	15.....	x	302

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
16	30.....	x	205
17	1.....	iv	110
	3.....	iii	46
		x	115
	5.....	x	124, 160
	9.....	xi	283
	11.....	x	300
	12.....	vi	301
		xi	283, 385
	16.....	xi	281
	17.....	iv	348
	20.....	xi	283
	21.....	xi	283
	21-23.....	v	169
	22.....	ii	424
18	11.....	xi	197
	20.....	ix	162
		xii	339
	36.....	iii	193
		xii	168
	37.....	iii	195
		xi	383
	38.....	vii	24
19	4.....	vii	24
	7.....	vii	26
	30.....	viii	531
	32-34.....	vi	238
20	1, &c.....	vi	215
	4.....	x	150
	8.....	x	150
	21.....	x	143
	22.....	x	360
	22, 23.....	xii	207
	28.....	iii	116
		x	196, 207, 283
	30, 31.....	ii	221
	31.....	x	283
		xi	277, 297
21	15-17.....	vi	217
	17.....	iv	449
	18.....	iii	9
	21.....	iii	266
	25.....	vi	217

ACTS.

1	4.....	viii	350
	11.....	iv	79
	16.....	vi	11
	24.....	i	156
		x	318
2	1.....	vi	242
		ix	178

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page	Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
2	3, 4.....	xii	274	10	12.....	ix	354
	4.....	iii	477		24.....	xii	261
	30.....	x	229		29.....	iii	94
	33.....	x	313		34.....	xi	354
	37.....	iii	380		35.....	ii	485
	38.....	x	369			xi	309
		xii	222, 240		36.....	x	196
	39.....	xi	367		38.....	iv	344
		xii	248			x	372
	41.....	vi	218		41.....	xii	191
		ix	162		43.....	xi	47, 297
		xii	339		44.....	xii	275
	44.....	vi	243		45.....	xii	275
3	15.....	x	350	11	19-21 .....	vi	123
	16.....	x	313		26.....	vi	246
	17.....	vi	189	12	5.....	xii	54
	21.....	iii	92	13	2.....	i	254
	22.....	iii	91		14.....	ix	188
	26.....	iv	500		15.....	vi	189, 285
		x	229			ix	188
4	4.....	ix	162			xii	174
		xii	339		22.....	vi	113
	12.....	iii	235			ix	310
		iv	492		27.....	vi	189, 285
	13.....	ii	380			ix	188
5	3, 4.....	x	374		32, 33 .....	x	229
	28.....	ix	210		33.....	vii	38
	34-40.....	vi	243		34, 35 .....	x	229
6	3.....	xii	191		38.....	xi	61, 187
	8 .....	iii	36		38, 39 .....	xi	173
7	1, &c.....	vi	243		39.....	v	177, 394
	30.....	x	165		48.....	xi	387, 435
	35.....	xi	53	14	1.....	vi	123
	37.....	x	229		5.....	vi	189
	38.....	x	165, 183		11.....	x	200
	43.....	x	198		17.....	xi	169
	51.....	xi	398		23.....	xii	191
	54-60 .....	ii	419	15	2.....	xi	388
	59.....	iii	28		6.....	xii	200
		x	318		10.....	iii	253
		xii	14		18.....	xi	434
	60.....	x	318		20.....	vi	57
8	1, 2.....	iii	37		21.....	xii	70
	29.....	iii	461		23.....	i	156
		x	373		28.....	x	372
	32.....	iii	147		29.....	vi	57
	34.....	ix	264	16	3.....	xii	228, 230
	37.....	iv	367		9.....	xi	331
	38, 39 .....	xii	278		15.....	xii	260
9	1.....	ii	270, 426		30.....	viii	471
	1-20 .....	vi	244			xi	218
	6.....	ii	392		31.....	iii	495
	11.....	xii	56			v	52
10	2.....	xii	259		33.....	xii	260

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
16	34.....	xii	259
	37.....	vi	245
17	1-4.....	vi	123
	1-19.....	vi	298
	18.....	xii	25
	23.....	iv	187
	26.....	ii	89, 354
		iii	409
		iv	343
		xii	41
	27.....	iii	241
		iv	15
	28.....	ii	197
		vi	24
		ix	502
		x	107
	29.....	x	388
	30.....	xi	294
	31.....	x	102
	32.....	ii	385
	34.....	ii	198
18	3.....	vi	245
	9, 10.....	xi	402
19	2.....	x	373
	3.....	x	370
	5.....	x	370
	19.....	vi	248, 281
	21.....	vi	248
20	21.....	vii	319
		xi	294
	28.....	viii	469
		x	125, 242, 347, 349
		xi	68
		xii	171
	30.....	viii	21
	32.....	viii	345
	35.....	ii	445
	36-38.....	vi	248
21	11.....	vi	205
	13.....	iii	231
	14.....	iv	351
22	10.....	xi	388
	25.....	vi	245
23	1.....	viii	331
	5.....	xii	155
	8.....	xii	16
24	25, 26.....	vi	249
25	11.....	vi	250
	13.....	vi	250
26	8.....	viii	44
	9.....	iii	40
	13-15.....	iii	41
	17.....	ii	271

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
26	18.....	viii	469
		xi	290
	29.....	iii	43
		v	13
27	23.....	iii	22
		xii	44
28	15.....	viii	452
	15, 16.....	vi	250
	23.....	xi	389
	25.....	vi	11
		vii	246
		x	142, 366
	25-27.....	xi	392
	30.....	vi	250

ROMANS.

1	1.....	ii	218
	3, 4.....	ii	271, 303
		vii	13, 15, 19
		x	246, 350
	4.....	iii	116
		vii	39
		x	225, 247
	5, 6.....	xi	367
	7.....	x	328
	16.....	iii	382
		iv	463
		xi	291
	16, 17.....	ii	268
		iv	396
		vii	208
	17.....	iii	391
		vi	255
		xi	195
	18.....	vi	257
		xi	42
	20.....	ii	255
		ix	379
	21.....	iv	440
		vi	98
		vii	217
	21-25.....	x	330
	21-32.....	vi	256
	22.....	vi	25
	26.....	ii	479
	28.....	ii	244
	29-31.....	iii	466
2	1.....	iv	45
	4.....	ii	76
		xi	350
	4, 5.....	xi	328
	5.....	xi	7

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
2	7-11	iv	243
	8	iv	9
	9	iii	389
	11	x	99
	14	x	98
		xi	309
	15	x	98
	16	xi	493
	23	i	156
	25	iv	355
	28, 29	xii	239
	29	iv	345
3	1, 2	iv	45
	6	xii	19
	10, &c	x	469
	19	vi	257
		x	98, 474
		xi	331, 432
	20	iii	235
		iv	287
		vi	259
	21, 22	xi	194
	23	v	49
		vi	256
		x	474
		xi	432
	24	xi	51, 59
	24, 25	ii	439
		iv	176
		v	49
		xi	197
	24-26	xi	63
	25	x	126
		xi	38, 80
	25, 26	vi	258
		viii	385
		xi	173
	26	xi	195
	28	vi	255
	31	viii	137
4		xii	29, 85
	3	vi	64, 258, 316
		viii	497
		xi	122, 199, 203, 206, 208
	4-8	xi	174
	5	iii	235
		xi	199, 203, 208
	5-8	xi	213
	6	xi	202
	9	xi	122, 203
	11	vii	524
		xi	122
		xii	225

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
4	15	iii	431
	16	vii	219
		viii	507
		xi	215
		xii	224
	19	xi	212
	20, 21	iii	302
	22-24	xi	203
	23	xi	212
	25	xi	32
5	1	v	49, 59, 176, 394
		vi	255, 348
		xi	22, 249, 259
	1, &c	xi	427
	2	xi	259
	3	ii	422
	5	iv	454
		v	50
		xi	270
	6	xi	29, 30
	7, 8	iv	451, 532
	8	xi	23, 30
	9	xi	28, 47, 106, 197
	10	x	260
		xi	45, 46, 106, 201
10, 11	10, 11	xi	43
	11	iv	30
		v	177, 394
		xi	44, 259
12	12	iii	250
		x	434, 437
		xi	280
	13	xi	199
14	14	x	445, 449
	15	xi	4, 275, 280
	16	xi	429
	17	xi	291
18	18	iii	78, 135
		x	452
		xi	4, 275, 280, 352
	18, 19	x	437, 449
19		xi	196, 211, 280
	19	xi	186
	20	iii	360, 431
	20, 21	viii	435
6	1, &c	vi	258
	1-7	xii	6, 282
	2	xi	70
	3, 4	xii	281
	6	ii	457

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
6	6.....	v	49
	10.....	xi	33
	11.....	iv	409
	11, 12 ....	iv	500
	12, 13 ....	v	83
	14.....	iv	409
		v	83
		x	125
		xi	249
	15.....	iv	500
	21.....	iv	158
	22.....	xi	249
	23.....	vi	39
		viii	498
		x	436, 442
		xi	245, 423, 432
7	1, &c ....	vi	259
		xi	224
		xii	5
	7.....	viii	137
		xii	85
	12.....	iii	432
		viii	418
		x	95, 385
		xi	7
	14.....	xii	5
	18.....	iii	134
		x	472
		xi	294
	24.....	ii	386
		v	31
	24, 25 ....	iv	288
		xii	6
	25.....	x	472
8	1.....	iv	288, 409
		v	59, 176, 394
		vii	197
		viii	255, 453
		ix	299
		x	472
		xi	224, 251, 264
		xii	5
	1, &c ....	xi	224
	1, 2.....	vi	259
		vii	208
	3.....	iii	388
		vii	193
		x	251
	3, 4.....	iv	174
		v	169
		xi	69
		xii	9
	5.....	xi	260
	5-9.....	x	472

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
8	6.....	viii	449
	7.....	ii	305
		vi	42
		xi	45
	8.....	ii	386
		vi	42
	9.....	iii	384
		x	361
		xi	260, 291
		xii	240
	11.....	viii	473
		x	248, 375
	13.....	viii	449
		xi	465
	14.....	x	375
		xi	260, 270
	14, 15 ....	x	437
	15.....	v	22, 174, 177, 394
		xi	255, 259
	15, 16 ....	iv	287
		v	50
		xi	253, 270
	16.....	v	173, 174, 182
		vi	259
		x	260, 269
	17.....	xi	249, 252, 259, 270
	17-25 ....	xi	371
	18.....	viii	454
	19-23 ....	iii	132, &c.
	23.....	ii	389
		vi	275
	26.....	viii	454
		x	372
	28.....	viii	453
	28-30 ....	xi	371
	29, 30 ....	vi	261, 263
	30.....	iii	344
		xi	369
	31.....	iii	146
		ix	498
	32.....	ii	74
		iii	245
		x	260
		xi	41
		xii	19
	33.....	xi	244
	33, 34 ....	viii	389
	34.....	iii	450
	37.....	viii	461
9	1, &c ....	vi	260
		xi	311
	1, 2.....	xi	311

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
9	5.....	x	214
	6.....	xi	312
	6-9.....	xi	338
	7.....	xi	312
	10-13 ....	xi	312
	11.....	vi	263
	11-13 ....	xi	336, 435
	13.....	vi	203, 261
	14.....	xi	314
	15.....	xi	314
	16.....	xi	315
	17.....	vi	261
		xi	317
	18.....	vii	314
	19.....	xi	318, 321
	20.....	xi	318,
	21, 22 ....	vi	261
		xi	319
	22-25 ....	xi	323
	24.....	xi	368
	30.....	xi	211
	30-32 ....	xi	334
	36.....	x	207
10	1.....	xi	320
	1, &c ....	xi	311
	3.....	xi	195
	4.....	xi	211
	5.....	xi	64
	6.....	x	153
	10.....	iv	367
		vi	256
	12.....	viii	436, 533
		x	59
	13.....	x	195, 321
	13, 14 ....	ii	492
	14.....	xii	19
	14, 15 ....	xi	343
	17.....	xi	343
	19.....	xi	308
11	20.....	iv	412
	21.....	ii	307
	1, &c ....	vi	262
		xi	311
	5.....	xi	334, 336
	6.....	xi	227
	7.....	xi	307, 336
	11.....	vii	252
	20-22.....	xi	332
	22.....	iv	9
	24.....	xii	252
	28.....	xi	45
	33.....	iii	301
		vii	53
		ix	368

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
11	33.....	xi	335
	35.....	x	99
12	9.....	iv	450
	9-21.....	vi	265
	10.....	iii	44, 101, 236
	11.....	iii	19
	12.....	xii	54
	15.....	viii	344
	17.....	xii	144
	18.....	viii	330
	19.....	ii	380
		xii	104
	20.....	ii	352
13	1.....	xi	389
		xii	124, 152, 155
	2.....	xii	151
	3, 4.....	xii	154
	5.....	xii	155
	6, 7.....	xii	155
	9.....	x	384
	10.....	iv	454
		x	382
		xii	47
	12.....	iv	431
14	1, &c....	vi	265
	6.....	iii	1
	7, 8.....	iii	1-20
	15.....	xi	276, 285
	17.....	iii	167
		iv	448
15		viii	329
	5.....	xi	259
	9.....	xi	32
	12.....	xi	241
	13.....	x	372
	30.....	xii	54
16	33.....	xi	259
	1, &c ....	vi	266
	20.....	ii	458
		x	428
1 CORINTHIANS.			
1	2.....	x	321
	4.....	xi	32
	12, 13....	vi	267
	13.....	x	370
	16.....	xii	261
	17-20 ....	vi	267
	20.....	ii	442
	21.....	ii	318
		iv	463
		xii	314

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
1	22.....	vi	195
	22-24.....	viii	33
	24.....	xi	368
	30.....	iii	391
		iv	186, 481
		vi	354
		xi	196
2	2.....	ii	309, 448
		x	298
	4.....	x	372
	6, 7.....	viii	33
	7.....	ii	318
	7-13.....	vi	268
	8.....	x	125, 218, 242, 350
		xi	68
	10.....	x	375
	11.....	iv	293
		viii	472
	11, 12.....	iv	395
		x	361
	12.....	vii	503
		x	437
	13.....	vi	12
	14.....	ii	327
		vi	42
		viii	71
	16.....	vi	265
3	3.....	x	471
	3, &c.....	vi	267
	6.....	ii	218
		xii	142
	11.....	iii	235
	12.....	vi	358
	13.....	iv	17
	19.....	ix	170
	21-23.....	iii	11
		viii	457
	22.....	ii	78
		iv	25
4	3.....	iii	3
	4.....	xii	12
	7.....	xi	396
	11.....	ix	198
	17.....	vi	268
5	3.....	x	292
	5.....	xii	209
	7.....	iv	501
		xi	88, 114
		xii	169
	11.....	xii	169
6	9-11.....	ii	446
		iii	505
	11.....	ii	277, 446

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
6	13.....	xii	23
	17.....	vi	265
	19.....	ix	412
		x	375
	19, 20.....	iv	352
		xi	51
		xii	44
	20.....	ii	389
		xi	52
7	14.....	xi	344
		xii	251
	18.....	xi	368
	21.....	ii	445
	29-31.....	iii	444
	31.....	viii	443
8	4.....	vi	99, 341
		ix	170, 461
	5.....	vi	301
	5-6.....	ii	336
	6.....	x	258
	11.....	xi	276, 285
9	1.....	vi	278, 284
	19-21.....	vii	315
	24.....	iii	229
	24-27.....	vi	269, 304
	27.....	ii	386
		iii	30, 229
10	2.....	xii	273
	4.....	vi	200
		xi	103, 133
	9.....	x	182
	11.....	ix	250
		xi	102
	12.....	iii	30
	13.....	viii	330
	14-31.....	vi	270
	16.....	xii	294
	31.....	iii	185
11	19.....	viii	21
	23-26.....	xii	287
	25.....	iii	60
	26.....	iii	101
		vi	210
		xii	297
	27.....	vi	212
	29.....	vi	212
12	6.....	viii	460
	7.....	iv	412
13	1.....	iv	386
		vi	360
	2.....	iv	100
	4-7.....	iv	389
	5.....	xii	104
	9-13.....	iv	392



Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
14	20.....	ii	445
	24, 25.....	ii	309, 445
15	3.....	xi	32
	10.....	iv	526
		xi	401
	12.....	xii	20
	19.....	ii	259
		iii	231
	20.....	ii	389
		viii	41
	22.....	x	406, 445, 449
		xi	275
	24.....	iii	26
	25.....	i	183-187
		ii	391
		iv	246
	25, 26.....	ii	391
	35.....	ii	393
		viii	45
		xii	17
	39.....	ii	394
	41.....	ii	394
		x	71
	42.....	viii	46
	44.....	viii	46
	47.....	viii	46
	50.....	ii	394
		viii	45
	51, 52.....	vi	299
	56.....	xi	200
	56, 57.....	iii	427
	58.....	viii	340
16	2.....	xii	108
	15.....	xi	389
		xii	261

## 2 CORINTHIANS.

1	3.....	x	92, 217
	8-11.....	vi	273
	12.....	iv	501
		v	174
		xi	260
	24.....	iii	100
2	1-5.....	vi	273
	14.....	ii	441
	16.....	ii	367
3	2.....	iii	462
	6.....	x	373
	15.....	viii	530
	17.....	x	375
	18.....	iii	238
		vi	343

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
3	18.....	x	108
4	4.....	iii	250
		vii	346
		x	199
	6.....	iv	131
		viii	513
	7.....	iv	159
	8, 9.....	vi	274
	17.....	viii	446
	18.....	viii	439
5	1.....	viii	451
	4.....	vi	275
	6.....	iii	23
		xii	14, 16
	6-8.....	xi	259
	7.....	viii	462
	8.....	iv	16
		viii	43, 444
	14.....	iii	456
		x	127
		xi	29, 279
	14, 15.....	iii	417
		viii	410
	17.....	iii	53
		vii	197
		viii	361
		xi	251
	18.....	ii	448
	18, 19.....	xi	44
	19.....	ii	75
		iii	389
		ix	368
		xi	47, 168, 199, 200, 275
	19, 20.....	xi	280
	20.....	xi	32
	21.....	iii	59, 394
		xi	36, 107, 186, 196
6	8.....	ix	196
	14.....	iii	255
	16.....	xi	259
	17.....	vi	263
	17, 18.....	xi	252
	18.....	xi	259
7	1.....	ii	378
		v	169
		vi	263
		xii	4, 7
	4.....	xi	32
8	1.....	iv	443
	7.....	xii	108
	8, 9.....	vi	276
	9.....	ii	354

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
8	9.....	iii	117
		iv	318
		xii	108
	12.....	xii	108
9	2.....	xi	32
	7.....	xii	108
	8.....	vi	276
		xii	108
	11.....	vi	276
	15.....	ii	354, 444
		iv	120
10	4.....	iv	217, 442
	13-16 ...	iii	455
11	3.....	x	406
	23.....	iii	231
12	2-4.....	vi	276
		xii	16
	5.....	xi	32
	7.....	vi	276
		viii	533
	8, 9.....	x	320
		xii	54
	10.....	xi	32
	14.....	xii	144
	18.....	vi	275
13	14.....	vi	277
		x	143, 328, 367

# GALATIANS.

1	1, &c....	vi	278
	4.....	xi	32
	6.....	xi	367
	16.....	iii	228
		vi	278, 284
	24.....	ii	131
2	1, &c....	vi	278
	16.....	xi	79
		xii	229
	19.....	iii	228
	20.....	ii	237
		iii	227, 315
		v	49
		vi	356
		vii	225
		viii	507
		xi	237
	21.....	xi	182, 211
3	6.....	vi	64, 258, 316
		xi	209
	7-9.....	xi	206
	8, 9.....	iii	493
		vi	64, 279
		xii	225

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
3	10.....	iv	314
	13.....	iv	111
		vi	213
		xi	37, 51
	14.....	iii	495
	16.....	iii	488
	19.....	x	187
		xii	229
	21.....	xi	211
	26.....	xi	249
	27-29 ...	iii	79
		vi	279
		xii	233
	28.....	viii	436
4	4.....	iv	168
	4-6.....	xi	253
	5, 6.....	xi	264
	6.....	iv	291, 300
		v	165, 174
		x	361
		xi	270
	14.....	vi	278
	18.....	iii	255
	22-24 ...	vii	378
	26.....	iii	281
5	2-4.....	xii	228
	6.....	vi	265
		viii	10, 367
	13.....	xi	367
	18.....	xi	260, 264
	19-23 ...	vi	279
	20.....	viii	21
	22.....	iv	388
	22, 23 ...	iii	383
		xi	260
	24.....	xi	264
6	7.....	ii	346
		vi	280
	7, 8.....	viii	422
	8 .....	iii	33
		vi	280
	10.....	iii	20, 255
		xii	107
	12-14 ...	vi	280
	14.....	ii	379
		iii	55, 392
		vi	280
		ix	170
	17.....	iii	65

# EPHESIANS.

1	3.....	viii	533
---	--------	------	-----

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page	Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
1	3.....	x	217	3	11.....	xi	386
	3-5.....	vi	262, 281		12.....	iii	230
	4-6.....	xi	361		14.....	x	322
	7.....	iii	343		14, 15.....	ii	376
		iv	429		14-19.....	ii	458
		vi	284			iii	230
		xi	23, 40, 51,			v	170
			52, 61, 106,			vi	283
			114		16.....	vi	284
	8.....	x	56		17.....	iii	129
	9.....	vi	281		18.....	viii	31
		xii	215		19.....	iv	531
	10.....	xi	363			viii	31
	11.....	xi	362		20.....	viii	533
	13.....	xi	363			x	59
	13, 14....	xi	270	4	1.....	xi	369
	14.....	ii	390		4.....	vi	282
		xi	270			xi	369
	16.....	xi	32		5, 6.....	ii	313
	18.....	iv	347		6.....	x	217
		xi	290		8-10.....	viii	299
	19.....	vi	284			x	180
	21.....	x	310		9.....	viii	296
	23.....	ix	502		11.....	ii	447
		x	107			vi	284
2	1.....	x	441			viii	39
	1, &c.....	vi	286, 352		11, 12....	xii	169
	2.....	viii	37, 410		12.....	ii	375
	3.....	x	437			iv	83
	4.....	ix	368			viii	457
	7.....	vi	284		13.....	viii	31
	8.....	xi	215, 245, 433		14.....	viii	32
	12.....	ii	373		22.....	iv	409
		iv	410		22-24.....	x	471
		viii	535			xii	9
	13.....	xi	23		24.....	x	392
	16.....	xi	47		29.....	iii	255
	16-18....	vi	282		30.....	viii	282
	18-20.....	viii	39			xi	270, 398
	19-22.....	ii	335		31.....	iii	44
		vi	282	5	2.....	xi	88, 108
	20.....	vi	197		6.....	xi	32
3	3-6.....	vi	281		8.....	iv	132, 348
	4, 5.....	viii	39		16.....	iv	195
	4-6.....	xi	386			xii	122
	4-11.....	iii	346		20.....	xi	32
	6.....	iv	315		25.....	xii	134
		vi	284		25-27.....	iv	446
	8.....	vi	262			v	169
	8-11.....	xi	364			x	95
	9.....	ii	329		27.....	iv	18
		vi	20		28, 29....	xii	134
	10.....	iv	179		32.....	xii	215
		vi	23	6	1.....	xii	139

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
6	2.....	xii	31, 137
	3, 4.....	xii	137
	4.....	xii	141
	5.....	xii	145
	5-8.....	xii	146
	9.....	xii	146
	10.....	iv	443
	10-18.....	vi	286
	12.....	iii	29
		viii	302, 312
	13.....	iii	229
		iv	203, 432
	18.....	viii	461
	24.....	viii	410

# PHILIPPIANS.

1	9.....	iv	348
	9-11.....	ii	458
	12-14.....	vi	287
	15-18.....	vi	288
	19.....	viii	460
		x	361
	20-23.....	vi	288
	21.....	xii	14
	23.....	ii	445
		iii	28, 230
		iv	16, 456
		viii	43
	27.....	ii	372
		viii	339
	29.....	xi	433
2	3.....	vi	289
	4.....	ii	445
	5-7.....	x	336
	6-8.....	vi	289
		vii	43
		viii	384
	7.....	ii	227
		iii	117
	8.....	iv	111
		viii	469
		x	149, 350
		xi	198
	9.....	iv	85
	10.....	x	322
	11.....	viii	411
	12, 13.....	iii	21, 446
		v	31
		vi	264
		viii	419, 461
		ix	307
		xi	400

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
2	15.....	iii	20
		iv	332
		viii	329, 338
	17.....	iii	231
		vi	290
3	3.....	xii	240
	6.....	v	13
	7.....	iii	29
	7, 8.....	iv	281
	8.....	ii	448
		iii	46, 228
	9.....	xi	195
	12.....	viii	329
	13, 14.....	iv	446
		vi	291
		viii	450
	14.....	iii	29
	17.....	ii	371
	19.....	x	199
	20, 21.....	ii	371, 383
	21.....	xi	244
		xii	17
4	4.....	xi	259
	5.....	viii	451
	6.....	ii	78, 204
		xii	53, 54
	10-14.....	vi	291
	12.....	viii	461
	13.....	iv	371
		viii	461, 475
	18.....	xi	108
	23.....	x	328

# COLOSSIANS.

1	10.....	iii	255
	12.....	ii	377
		iii	156, 284
	14.....	x	307
		xi	28, 242
	14, 15.....	x	352
		xi	68
	15.....	ii	284
	15-17.....	x	307, 309
	16.....	ii	284
		iii	51
		iv	229
		vi	20, 296
		vii	41
		ix	367
	16, 17.....	viii	34
		ix	367
		x	293

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
1	17.....	vi	203
		ix	496
	18.....	x	308
	19-22.....	xi	43
	20.....	vi	48
	21.....	xi	281
	27.....	x	208
2	1 &c.....	vi	296
	2, 3.....	viii	33
	5.....	iv	437
	6.....	viii	329
	8.....	iv	463
		vi	293, 304
		viii	22
	9.....	x	350
	10-12.....	xii	233
	12.....	xii	283
	15.....	viii	296, 299
	17.....	xi	102
	19.....	viii	360
3	1, &c.....	vi	297
	2.....	iii	235
		xii	63
	10.....	vi	33
		x	392
	11.....	viii	550
	12.....	xi	345
	17.....	vi	359
	20.....	xii	138
	21.....	xii	143
	22.....	vi	494
4	1.....	xii	147
	1, 2.....	xii	69

## 1 THESSALONIANS.

1	5.....	ii	308
	5, 10.....	ix	181
	10.....	xi	42
2	12.....	xi	367, 369
4	13-18.....	vi	298
	14.....	ii	390, 446
		iv	383
		xi	244
	16.....	xi	244
	16-18.....	iv	383
	17.....	x	108
	18.....	ii	397
5	2.....	vi	204
	3.....	iv	31
	9, 10.....	xi	245
	16.....	vi	275
	16-18.....	viii	417

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
5	17.....	iii	145
		xii	53
	17, 18.....	xii	63
	19.....	xi	398
	23.....	v	170
		xii	4, 7

## 2 THESSALONIANS.

1	6.....	xi	7
	7, 8.....	xi	277
2	1, &c.....	vi	300
	3.....	vi	300
	4.....	vi	301
		ix	221
	8.....	vi	303
		ix	221
		x	208
	9-11.....	vi	302
	13.....	vi	263
	13, 14.....	xi	359, 369
	15.....	xi	360
	16, 17.....	x	320
3	1.....	iii	101, 205
		viii	329
	6.....	xii	169

## 1 TIMOTHY.

1	1.....	iv	319
		x	208
	4.....	vi	304
	4-7.....	viii	36
	15.....	v	13
		vii	219
		ix	299
	17.....	ix	367
		x	49
	19.....	xi	376
	19, 20.....	viii	22
2	1-3.....	iii	409
		xii	54, 155
	4.....	iii	409
		viii	421
		xi	278, 301, 347
	5.....	ii	313
		vi	297
		viii	432
	6.....	iii	267
		iv	343
		xi	52
	11.....	x	406

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
2	13, 14.....	x	406
3	4.....	xii	260
	5.....	xii	19
	16.....	iv	382
		xi	67
4	6.....	vii	497
	8.....	iv	443
		viii	409
	10.....	iv	343
		viii	433
		xi	241, 275, 280
	13.....	v	269
	14.....	xii	172
5	17.....	xii	173
6	1.....	xii	145
	3.....	viii	31
	4, 5.....	vi	304
	12.....	iii	29
	14.....	x	208, 297
	16.....	ix	367, 471
	18.....	iv	340
	20, 21.....	viii	22, 30

## 2 TIMOTHY.

1	6.....	xii	172
	7.....	ii	159
	9.....	xi	385
	9, 10.....	xi	369
	10.....	x	208
	12.....	ii	397, 429
		xi	241
	13.....	vii	497
	15.....	viii	22
2	3.....	iii	255
	10.....	iii	5
	13.....	x	105
	17, 18.....	viii	22
	19.....	xi	382
3	12.....	v	10
	13.....	ix	326
	15.....	ii	235
	16.....	iv	268
		vi	11, 81
	17.....	vii	228
4	1.....	x	208
	6.....	vi	290
	7, 8.....	vi	304
	8.....	iii	284
		x	208
	16.....	iii	381
		viii	534

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
4	18.....	x	327
	22.....	x	321

## TITUS.

1	5.....	xii	171
2	10.....	viii	328
	11.....	viii	542
	11-14.....	v	170
	13.....	x	208
	14.....	iii	66
		x	95
		xi	23
3	5.....	x	375
		xi	59
		xii	239
	5, 6.....	xii	275
	7.....	xi	248
	9.....	viii	36
	10.....	viii	21

## PHILEMON.

16.....	ii	445
	vi	306

## HEBREWS.

1	1.....	ii	273
		iii	271
		iv	168
		x	186, 364
	1, &c.....	vi	307
	2.....	viii	35, 499
		x	304
	3.....	ii	433
		vi	313
		vii	41
		viii	35
		ix	367
		x	113, 249, 307,
			351
		xi	88
	4.....	x	248
	5.....	viii	35
		x	227, 248
	6.....	iv	85
		viii	35
		x	322
	7.....	viii	36
	8.....	ii	279

Chap	Verse	Vol.	Page	Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
1	8.....	iii	167, 192	4	12.....	vi	314
		x	210, 306		12, 13....	x	295
	9.....	x	306		13.....	ix	367
	10-12....	iv	90			x	3
		x	210, 290, 306,			xi	169
			312		15.....	ii	230
	11.....	iii	27			iv	36, 536
	11, 12....	ii	73			viii	384, 406
	14.....	ii	377		15, 16....	x	352
		vi	47		16.....	iv	174
2	1.....	ii	367			vi	88
	1-4.....	vi	308			viii	547
	2, 3.....	x	186	5	1, &c....	vi	310
	3.....	ii	435		8.....	vii	42
		xi	277		9.....	x	352
		xii	19	6	1.....	vii	497
	5.....	vi	308		4, 5.....	xi	276, 376
	5-9.....	iii	174		4-8.....	vi	311
	7.....	iv	237			xi	288
		x	299		10.....	viii	513
	9.....	ii	89			x	99
		iv	343		12.....	iii	227
		xi	29, 275		18.....	ii	277
	10.....	iii	247			iv	319
		vi	308			ix	462
		x	207, 352			x	85, 104
	11.....	ii	434		19.....	iii	284
	11-18....	iv	325			iv	319
	14.....	ii	434	7	1, &c....	vi	310
		iii	489		25.....	viii	384
		viii	56		26.....	iv	451
		x	149, 255, 351			x	95
	14, 15....	iii	246		27.....	xi	109
		xii	13		28.....	vi	310
	15.....	ii	397, 445			vii	43
	17.....	ii	434	8	1-5.....	vi	310
		x	299, 353		3.....	xi	88
	18.....	iii	244		5.....	xi	105
		viii	406		6.....	ix	234
3	1, &c....	vi	309		8.....	viii	502
	2, 3.....	i	27		10.....	viii	533
	5, 6.....	x	251			xi	343
	6.....	xi	241	9	4.....	iv	170
	15.....	iv	204		5.....	iv	168
		viii	476		7, &c....	vi	87
4	1.....	iii	284, 441			xi	104
		iv	372		8.....	viii	468
		vi	309			xi	104, 134
		viii	361		9.....	xi	104, 134
	2.....	ii	259		12.....	vi	310
		vi	89			xi	106, 245
	3.....	x	206		13, 14....	iii	376
	12.....	ii	309			xi	109
		iv	82		14.....	iii	113

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page	Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
9	14.....	iv	175	11	6.....	xi	148
		vi	310		7.....	vi	54
		x	375			ix	355
		xi	68			xii	235
	15.....	iii	249		8.....	xi	135, 241
		xi	245		9.....	iii	440
	22.....	iii	142			xi	128, 135
		viii	546			xii	224
		x	352		10.....	ii	373
		xi	61, 99, 182			iii	442, 458
	22-24.....	xi	110			iv	372
	23.....	xi	104			viii	426
	24.....	xi	104			xi	135
	26.....	vi	310			xii	224
		xi	88		11.....	xi	128
	28.....	xi	23, 34		13.....	ii	455
10	1.....	vi	87			vi	89
		xi	101			xi	129, 136, 154
	5.....	vi	89		14.....	iii	156
		xi	198			vi	65
	10.....	vi	87			xi	129
		viii	544		16.....	xi	135
		xi	198		18.....	xi	128, 151
	12.....	xi	32, 88		20.....	xi	128
	19-22.....	xi	112		24-27.....	xi	129
	20.....	iii	399		26.....	x	181
	21.....	iv	275		27.....	iv	372
	22.....	xi	254		31.....	xi	152
	23.....	x	106		32.....	xi	153
	25.....	ii	469		33.....	ii	455
		iii	20, 212		34.....	iv	435
		xii	70	12	1.....	iv	372, 446
	26, 27.....	iv	516			vi	312
		vi	312			vii	235
	26-31.....	xi	288			viii	445
	29.....	xi	276, 398		2.....	vii	225
	31.....	viii	493, 545			viii	540
		xi	5			x	347
	34.....	iii	5		6.....	iv	380
		viii	330		9.....	ix	471
	39.....	xi	376		14.....	viii	10
11	1.....	iv	372			ix	315
		viii	436, 440		16.....	vi	68
	2.....	vi	312		18.....	vi	84, 314
		xi	216, 372		22.....	i	125
	3.....	vi	18			ii	377
		ix	344			iii	274
		x	206, 306		22-24.....	iii	180
	4.....	iii	58			iv	410, 419
		x	384			viii	445
		xi	122, 154, 158		24.....	viii	432
	5.....	iv	297		25, 26.....	x	183
		xi	128, 372		26-29.....	iii	401
	6.....	i	35			vi	46



Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
12	28.....	iv	204
		xi	42
	29.....	viii	493, 545
		xi	42
13	3.....	ii	244
		viii	331
	5.....	viii	330, 534
		xii	110
	8.....	iii	298, 425
		x	290
	10.....	xii	298
	11-13....	xi	112
	12.....	xi	88
	16.....	xii	107
	20.....	xii	296
	20, 21....	xii	8
	21.....	vi	263
		viii	365

## JAMES.

1	1.....	vi	116, 315
	1, &c....	vi	316
	5.....	iv	43
		x	59
	12.....	vi	304
	13.....	iv	34
		vi	32
		x	85
	15.....	vi	34
		x	420, 442
	17.....	ix	367
		x	40
	20.....	iv	443
2	5.....	viii	404
	14.....	vi	316
	17.....	vii	202
		xi	239
	19.....	xi	239
	21.....	xi	234
	23.....	vi	64, 258
	24.....	xi	236
3	9.....	x	206
	17.....	ii	235
		vi	317
4	2.....	xi	433
	4.....	iii	370
	6.....	vi	289
5	16.....	xii	55, 62

## 1 PETER.

1	1.....	vi	318
	2.....	vi	263

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
1	2.....	xi	345, 346, 359
	3.....	x	69, 217
		xi	248
	4.....	viii	511
	6.....	iv	380
	7.....	i	131-133
		iv	367
	8.....	iii	108
	10.....	x	181
	10, 11....	ii	259
	11.....	iv	169
		viii	399
		x	361, 364
		xi	134
	12.....	iv	177
	17.....	iii	30
	18.....	ii	300
	18, 19....	xi	51, 52
	19.....	xi	68
	24, 25....	iii	206, 340
		iv	156
		viii	502
2	2.....	iv	511
	3.....	xi	291
	4.....	xi	345
	9.....	xii	240
	12.....	ii	372
	13, 14....	vi	319
	14.....	xii	124, 151
	14, 15....	xii	154
	17.....	ii	88
		viii	331
	21.....	xi	29
	22.....	x	95
	24.....	iii	59
		iv	175
		xi	33
	25.....	iii	343
		viii	532
3	18.....	iii	394
		xi	23, 29, 32,
			106
	18-20....	x	181
	20, 21....	xii	234
4	2.....	x	471
	17.....	ii	382
5	2.....	xii	172
	4.....	vi	305
	5.....	vi	289
	7.....	iii	453
		viii	330
	8.....	iv	35
	13.....	vi	318
		xi	306

2 PETER.

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
1	4.....	iii	290
		v	52
		viii	506
	9.....	xi	376
	17-19 .....	iii	90
	19.....	iii	92
		iv	431
	21.....	iii	48
		iv	46
		vi	11, 158
		viii	39, 467
		x	364, 375
2	1.....	vii	456
		x	125
		xi	276, 278, 286
	1-3.....	xi	395
	4.....	ix	496
	9.....	viii	344
	14.....	xi	37
	21.....	iii	261
		viii	514
		xi	376
3	1.....	iii	99
	4.....	iii	298
		iv	383
	8.....	iii	298
	9.....	iv	102
		xi	350
	10.....	vi	204
	11.....	ii	424
		iv	285, 430
		viii	395
		xii	142
	14.....	iii	22, 284
		vi	300
		viii	361, 408
	15, 16 ....	vi	12, 254
	18.....	x	327

1 JOHN.

1	1.....	vi	320
		viii	50
	3.....	ii	376
		viii	50
	5.....	x	105
	9.....	x	99
		xi	65
2	1, 2.....	iv	324
	2.....	iii	59
		xi	38, 70, 275,

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
2	2.....	xi	281
	6.....	ii	435
	15.....	iii	236
		iv	454
	16.....	iii	185
	18.....	vi	321
	18, 19 ....	viii	22
	22.....	vi	321
		viii	52
3	2.....	ii	70
		iii	160
	3.....	vi	263
	4.....	x	436, 442
		xi	423
	7.....	iv	500
	8.....	ii	234
		v	169
		vi	280
		x	428
	9.....	v	83
		xi	249
	12.....	x	384
		xi	125
	16 .....	iii	6
		x	127
		xii	115
	17.....	ii	352
		xii	19
4	1-3.....	viii	50
	2.....	x	149
	3.....	vi	321
	4.....	ii	458
	8.....	viii	429
	9, 10 ....	x	260
	10.....	ii	74
		iii	105
		iv	452
		xi	38
	15.....	vi	321
		viii	52
	16.....	viii	456
	18.....	iv	388, 454
	19.....	iii	64
		vii	198
	20.....	xii	19
5	1.....	viii	53
	4.....	ii	458
		iv	382
		v	49
		viii	53
	6.....	viii	54
	7.....	x	143
	11.....	v	172
		vii	219

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
5	11.....	ix	368
	14.....	xii	13
	16.....	vi	226, 311
	18.....	iii	53
		iv	409
	19.....	x	471
		xi	281
	20.....	x	213

## 2 JOHN.

1.....	vi	322
	xii	171
7.....	vi	321
	viii	50

## 3 JOHN.

1.....	vi	322
9.....	viii	22
9, 10 ....	vi	322

## JUDE.

1.....	vi	323
4.....	xi	394
6.....	iii	430
14.....	xi	142
15.....	xi	32
21.....	viii	510
24.....	ii	458

## REVELATION.

1	4.....	viii	470
		x	290
	4, 5.....	x	367
	5.....	iii	489
		xi	23
	5, 6.....	iii	60, 110
		x	327
	7.....	vi	299
	8.....	x	289, 301
	10-15 ....	ii	392
	17.....	iii	208

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
1	17.....	viii	391
		x	322
	17, 18 ....	x	289
	18.....	viii	307
	20.....	xii	212
2	1.....	vi	285
	6.....	viii	22
	7.....	iii	67
	8.....	x	289
	10.....	ii	425
		iv	433, 525
		xi	376
	11.....	iii	67
	15.....	viii	22
	23.....	iii	148
		x	295, 318
3	1.....	iv	356
	3.....	vi	204
	8.....	iii	450
		iv	525
	20.....	ii	266
	21.....	viii	501
4	3.....	vi	57
	8.....	iv	338
		x	142
5	4.....	ii	296
	9.....	xi	52
	11-13 ....	ii	296
	12.....	iii	392
	13.....	vi	327
		x	128, 327
6	10.....	ii	380
	16, 17.....	iii	430
	17.....	xi	42
7	14.....	iii	283
8	3.....	iv	324
12	9.....	x	428
13	6, 7.....	iv	155
		vi	301
14	1-3.....	iii	104
	3.....	iii	103
	6.....	i	146
		ii	299
	6, 7.....	iv	154
	7.....	iv	164
16	7.....	xi	7
	15.....	vi	204
17	14.....	vi	327
18	2.....	iv	155
	21.....	ii	296
19	10.....	x	331
	11-17.....	vi	329
	13.....	xii	272
	16.....	ii	303

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
19	16.....	x	196
20	11.....	viii	441
21	3.....	iii	361
		xii	225
	3, 4.....	iii	109
	3-5.....	iv	13
	14.....	vi	197
	19.....	iii	287
	22.....	iii	142
	23.....	iv	15

Chap.	Verse	Vol.	Page
22	1.....	iii	345
	3.....	iv	20
	5.....	iii	157
	13.....	x	289
	14.....	viii	498
	17.....	ii	477
		x	372, 492
		xi	278
	19.....	xi	389
	20.....	x	234

## INDEX TO SERMONS.

---

- Genesis* iii. 24, Paradise shut, guarded, and re-opened, iii. 350-362  
 ——— xxii. 18, All nations blessed in the Seed of Abraham, iii. 487-506  
 ——— xxiv. 63, Religious meditation, ii. 253-267
- Deuteronomy* iv. 5, 6, The influence of revealed truth upon a nation, iv. 506-519  
 ——— xxix. 29, Secret and revealed things, iii. 319-339  
 ——— xxxii. 31, The rock of believers, iv. 23-31
- 2 *Samuel* xxiii. 5, The everlasting covenant of God the salvation and desire of his people, viii. 495-511  
 ——— xxiv. 20-25, The destroying angel arrested, ii. 398-418
- 2 *Kings* x. 15, The right state of the heart, iii. 148-155
- 1 *Chronicles* xxix. 14-18, The building of the temple, ii. 334-351
- 2 *Chronicles* vi. 40, 41, The dedication of the temple, ii. 464-477
- Job* vii. 17, Man magnified by the divine regard, ii. 65-87  
 — x. 12, Life the gift of God, viii. 413-427  
 — xi. 13-15, The way to happiness, iv. 496-505  
 — xxxiv. 33, Presumption re-proved, iv. 359-366
- Psalms* xvi. 8, Habitual recollection of God, viii. 381-397  
 ——— xxxiii. 11, The immutability of God's counsels, iii. 298-305  
 ——— xliii. 4, The altar of God, iii. 141-147  
 ——— xlv. 11, Religious worship, iii. 207-215  
 ——— xlvi. 4, The security and happiness of the church, iv. 39-44  
 ——— l. 21, Abuse of the long-suffering of God, iii. 363-369  
 ——— lxxv. 11, The first Sabbath in the new year, iv. 520-530  
 ——— lxxviii. 18, The ascension, iv. 75-88  
 ——— lxxii. 18, 19, The kingdom of the Redeemer, viii. 398-412  
 ——— xcvi. 1, The reign of God, iv. 239-255  
 ——— cx. 1-3, The enemies of Christ vanquished, ii. 302-316  
 ——— cxiii. 5, 6, The majesty and condescension of God, iv. 225-238  
 ——— cxvi. 7, The rest of the soul, iii. 449-454  
 ——— cxliii. 10, The goodness of the Spirit, viii. 464-477
- Proverbs* iv. 18, The path of the just, iii. 261-264
- Ecclesiastes* xi. 1-6, Excitements to Missionary effort, ii. 352-370
- Isaiah* ii. 2-4, The mountain of the Lord's house, iii. 270-280  
 ——— vi. 1-7, Isaiah's vision, iv. 143-153

- Isaiah* ix. 2-7, The remedy of the world's misery, iv. 206-224  
 ——— xxvi. 12, National peace the gift of God, ii. 20-40  
 ——— xxxiii. 6, The importance of religious knowledge, iv. 458-471  
 ——— xl. 3-5, The divine glory revealed in Christ, iv. 307-318  
 ——— xlv. 7, God forming the light, and creating the darkness, viii. 478-494
- Jeremiah* x. 11, The destruction of idolatry, ii. 478-495
- Lamentations* iii. 33-35, The infliction of evil upon mankind, iv. 54-58
- Ezekiel* i. 1, Ezekiel's vision, iv. 256-274  
 ——— xxxvii. 9, Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones, ii. 1-19
- Daniel* ix. 24, The results of Messiah's death, iii. 385-391  
 ——— xii. 13, The servant of God dismissed and rewarded, iii. 17-35
- Hosea* iv. 6, The evils of ignorance, ii. 239-252
- Micah* v. 2-4, The Ruler coming forth from Bethlehem of Judea, viii. 526-537
- Zechariah* ii. 13, God raised up out of his holy habitation, iii. 471-486  
 ——— vi. 12, 13, The man whose name is the Branch, iii. 121-131  
 ——— ix. 9-12, The coming of the King of Zion, iii. 163-181  
 ——— xiii. 1, The fountain opened, iii. 375-378
- Matthew* i. 23, Emmanuel, God with us, iii. 240-245  
 ——— ii. 18, Rachel weeping for her children, iii. 75-84  
 ——— iv. 1, The temptation of Christ, iv. 32-38
- Matthew* vi. 6, Secret prayer, iii. 436-439  
 ——— vi. 10, The coming of God's kingdom, iii. 189-206  
 ——— vi. 22, 23, The illumination resulting from singleness of eye, viii. 512-525  
 ——— xi. 30, The yoke and burden of Christ, iii. 253-260  
 ——— xiv. 31, Little faith re-proved, iii. 421-426  
 ——— xvi. 26, The gain of the world, and the loss of the soul, iii. 216-226  
 ——— xvii. 1, 2, The transfiguration of Christ, iii. 85-93  
 ——— xxiv. 14, The Gospel of the kingdom, iii. 233-239  
 ——— xxv. 1-13, The parable of the wise and foolish virgins, iv. 97-109
- Mark* ix. 36, 37, Religious instruction an essential part of education, ii. 41-64
- Luke* x. 29, The parable of the good Samaritan, iv. 335-344  
 ——— xiii. 23-25, The strait gate iii. 265-270  
 ——— xv. 11-32, The parable of the prodigal son, iv. 59-74  
 ——— xix. 42, The day of visitation, iv. 1-12  
 ——— xxiii. 47, 48, The crucifixion, iii. 392-400  
 ——— xxiv. 49, Power from on high, iii. 379-384
- John* i. 4, Life in Christ, iv. 89-96  
 ——— i. 14, The incarnation of the eternal Word, ii. 431-440  
 ——— i. 23, The ministry of John the Baptist, iv. 472-481  
 ——— iii. 8, The new birth, iv. 406-418  
 ——— iii. 16, God's love to mankind, viii. 428-438  
 ——— iv. 24, The worship of God, iv. 482-495  
 ——— vi. 27, Christ sealed by the Father, iii. 306-318  
 ——— xii. 32, Christ lifted up, and drawing all men unto him, viii. 538-552

- John* xvii. 1, The final hour of the Son of God, iv. 110-119  
 — xx. 30, 31, The miracles of Christ, ii. 221-238  
 — xxi. 17, Love to Christ, iv. 449-457
- Acts* vii. 54-60, The death of Stephen, ii. 419-430.  
 — ix. 17, The conversion of Saul, iii. 36-45  
 — x. 29, The design of the Christian ministry, iii. 94-102  
 — xvii. 28, God with us, ii. 197-220
- Romans* i. 16, 17, St. Paul's confidence in the Gospel, ii. 268-283  
 — ii. 29, Inward religion, iv. 345-358  
 — iii. 1, 2, The oracles of God, iv. 45-53  
 — viii. 15, 16, The Spirit of adoption, iv. 287-306  
 — viii. 19-23, The final deliverance of believers, iii. 132-140  
 — viii. 28, The high privilege of them that love God, viii. 453-463  
 — xiii. 12, The armour of light, iv. 431-448  
 — xiv. 7, 8, Christian devotedness, iii. 1-16
- 1 *Corinthians* i. 30, Christ the wisdom of believers, iv. 186-194  
 — ii. 7, Christianity the wisdom of God in a mystery, ii. 317-333  
 — ii. 11, 12, Christianity of divine origin and authority, iv. 395-405  
 — xiii. 1, The importance of charity, iv. 386-394  
 — xv. 56, 57, Victory over sin, death, and the grave, iii. 427-435
- 2 *Corinthians* ii. 14, The triumph of the Gospel, ii. 441-454
- 2 *Corinthians* iv. 6, The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, iv. 131-142  
 — iv. 18, Looking at invisible things, viii. 439-452  
 — ix. 15, The unspeakable gift, iv. 120-130  
 — x. 13-16, The Mission field admeasured, iii. 455-470
- Galatians* i. 24, God glorified in good men, ii. 131-158  
 — ii. 20, The life of faith, iii. 227-232  
 — iv. 26, Jerusalem above, iii. 281-289  
 — vi. 14, Glorifying in the cross, iii. 55-66
- Ephesians* iii. 19, The love of Christ, iv. 531-542  
 — v. 16, The redemption of time, iv. 195-205
- Philippians* ii. 12, 13, The working out of salvation, iii. 446-448  
 — iii. 8, The excellency of the knowledge of Christ, iii. 46-54  
 — iii. 20, 21, Christian citizenship, ii. 371-382  
 — iii. 20, 21, The resurrection of the human body, ii. 383-397
- Colossians* i. 12, The inheritance of the saints, iii. 156-162  
 — i. 16, All things made for the Son of God, ii. 284-301
- 1 *Timothy* ii. 4, God would have all men to be saved, iii. 409-420
- 2 *Timothy* i. 7, Qualifications for the Christian ministry, ii. 159-196
- Hebrews* ii. 14, 15, The abolition of Satan's dominion, iii. 246-252  
 — vi. 19, Hope the anchor of the soul, iv. 319-334

- Hebrews* ix. 5, The cherubim and the mercy-seat, iv. 168-185  
 — ix. 14, The sacrifice of Christ, iii. 113-120  
 — x. 21, The priesthood of Christ, iv. 275-286  
 — xi. 9, Abraham's faith and pilgrimage, iii. 440-445  
 — xi. 24-26, Moses's choice, iii. 182-188  
 — xi. 33, Promises obtained through faith, ii. 455-463  
 — xii. 22-24, The high privileges of believers, iv. 419-430  
 — xii. 26-29, The shaking of heaven and earth, iii. 401-408  
*James* iv. 4, Friendship with the world, iii. 370-374  
 1 *Peter* i. 7, The trial of faith, iv. 367-385  
 — i. 24, 25, The frailty of man, and the immutability of the Gospel, iii. 340-349  
 — ii. 17, The religious instruction of the slaves in the West India colonies, advocated and defended, ii. 88-130  
 2 *Peter* i. 4, The design of the promises of God, iii. 290-297  
*Revelation* ii. 7, The tree of life, iii. 67-74  
 — xiv. 3, The song of the redeemed, iii. 103-112  
 — xiv. 6, 7, The angel flying through the midst of heaven, iv. 154-167  
 — xxi. 3-5, Heaven, iv. 13-22



## GENERAL INDEX.

### A.

- Abba*, why this term was used by St. Paul, iv. 291
- Abel*, the reason of his sacrifice being accepted, iii. 58, 71; xi. 120, *et seq.*—the expiatory character of his sacrifice considered, xi. 121, 122—its excellency, xi. 121—character of the testimony which he received, xi. 122—his sacrifice contrasted with that of Cain, xi. 123—nature of the faith of, xi. 124—the righteousness of Abel, xi. 125—his offering was not accepted because of his *personal* righteousness, xi. 126—the revelation on which his faith was grounded, xi. 130, 137, *et seq.*—objections against such a revelation refuted, xi. 132
- Aben-Ezra*, on the name Jehovah, x. 190
- Abernethy*, Rev. John, on the unity of the Deity, ix. 469—on the eternal duration of God, ix. 489—on the simplicity of the divine processes, x. 51—and on the holiness of God, x. 95
- Abijah*, the name explained, x. 191
- Abimelech*, the Philistine, his character, ix. 40
- Abomination of desolation*, meaning of the phrase, vi. 207
- Abraham*, separation of the family of, its bearing on the interests of religion, ii. 464; iv. 23—why his seed were conducted to Canaan, ii. 465—privileges of, iii. 319—why termed “the father of the faithful,” iii. 440—his justification, a pattern of ours, iii. 441—how his conduct illustrated his faith, iii. 442—object of his faith defined, iii. 442, 443—practical lessons deduced from his conduct, iii. 443, 444—was designed to instruct the world on the doctrine of immortality, iii. 458—the object contemplated in the call of, iii. 487; vi. 64—how his faith was honoured, iii. 488—“seed of Abraham,” a term applied to Christ, and why, iii. 488—objects contemplated in his separation from the rest of mankind, iv. 23—importance of the call of, vi. 62—his character as the head of a tribe, vi. 63—import of the Abrahamic covenant, vi. 64—his justification, vi. 65—why he dwelt in tents, vi. 65—strength of his faith, vi. 66—his conduct respecting Sarah, vi. 66—his negotiation with the children of Heth, vi. 68—why his family was brought into Egypt, vi. 70—promise to, concerning the extension of religious knowledge, ix. 40—his offering his son Isaac defended against the cavils of infidelity, ix. 329; xii. 365—his faith had reference to an antecedent revelation, xi. 135
- Abrahamic covenant*, the sign of circumcision and baptism, iii. 78—the changing of the sign, iii. 79—its unchangeable character, iii. 79—how children are said to enter it, iii. 79—its

- import, vi. 64—that in which David rejoiced, viii. 497—various revelations of the, alluded to, viii. 497—the covenant repeated to Abraham, viii. 498—its character established, xii. 224, *et seq.*—circumcision the sign and seal of, xii. 225—the unrestricted nature of the, in reference to spiritual blessings, xii. 226—probable reason for changing the initiatory rite, xii. 232—the Abrahamic and Christian covenant the same, differing only in circumstances, xii. 238. See *Baptism, Covenant.*
- Absolute perfection*, peculiar to the Most High, x. 85
- Absorption*, a favourite doctrine of the Hindoos, ix. 70, *et seq.*
- Abyssinia*, Princes of, from whom they claim descent, ix. 41—and from whom they received the Jewish religion, ix. 41
- Access to God*, constant, assured through the atonement, iii. 144—a distinguishing privilege of the heavenly world, iv. 15
- Accountable*, what creatures are said to be, x. 381
- Achan*, in what his sin consisted, vi. 102
- Ackerblad*, Mr., his labour to decipher the Rosetta stone, viii. 163
- Actions*, nature of, done before conversion, i. 128—man's general indifference to his own, iii. 366—God, the end of the actions of a good man, viii. 393—rules by which the morality of, are determined, ix. 6—freedom of the actions of men reconcilable with the divine prescience of them, x. 11, *et seq.*—actions of men, not necessitated, x. 13—fallacy of the argument, that “prescience destroys contingency,” x. 14—natural and moral actions defined, xii. 306—what constitutes actions good or evil, considered, xii. 306, *et seq.*
- Actions of God* considered, ix. 364, *et seq.*—in his conduct towards man, ix. 365—the result of liberty and choice, x. 49.
- Active righteousness of Christ*, the term, how far scriptural, xi. 75—the doctrine of the imputation of, a fallacy, xi. 75
- Acts of Christ*, proofs of divinity, x. 303—creation, x. 303—feeble criticisms of Socinians respecting, x. 303—of preservation, and of destruction, x. 312—working miracles, x. 313—the promise of the Holy Spirit, x. 313—forgiveness of sins, x. 313—the importance of these acts, x. 314.
- Acts of the Holy Spirit* described, x. 374
- Acts of the Apostles*, great object of the book of the, vi. 241
- Adam*, endowed with speech at his creation, vi. 61—nature of the death with which he was threatened, x. 442—in what sense he was the “head and representative of the human race,” x. 445—the state in which his posterity is placed, x. 446—the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity considered, xi. 198, *et seq.*
- Adams*, William, D. D., his refutation of Hume's “Essay on Miracles,” ix. 108
- Address*, affectionate, to the trustees, &c., of the London South Circuit, vii. 89–125—of the Methodist Conference to George IV. on his accession, viii. 345—its favourable reception, viii. 353—pastoral addresses of the Methodist Conference to the societies, viii. 328–366
- Adonai*, the import of the name, ix. 363; x. 193—why the Jews substituted this word for “Jehovah,” x. 193
- Adonijah*, the name explained, x. 191
- Adoption*, the Spirit of, explained, iv. 291—in the family of God, only witnessed by the Holy Spirit, iv. 293—its connexion

- with justification, v. 158 (n); xi. 248—the term not borrowed from the practice of the Greeks and Romans, xi. 252—the act of, defined, xi. 252—the Spirit's witness to the adoption of believers, where taught, xi. 253. See *Witness of the Spirit*.
- Adrian*, his allusion to Jesus Christ, ix. 168
- Adultery*, spiritual adultery described, iii. 374—ancient laws against, noticed, ix. 78—grossly practised among the ancients, ix. 79
- Advantages* enjoyed by the church of Christ, iv. 197
- Ænon*, near Salim, described, xii. 279
- Æons*, a species of imaginary beings, by which primitive Christianity was corrupted, vi. 293—of the Gnostics, what, viii. 27, 38; x. 281
- Affections*, of the Christian, where placed, ii. 381—just and proper, the gift of Christ, iv. 124—should be actively employed in spiritual worship, iv. 493—the exercise of the, grossly interfered with, on the Socinian scheme, x. 128.
- Afflictions*, complicated nature of, endured by the godly, iii. 11—existence of, how accounted for, iv. 54—not willingly inflicted by the Almighty, iv. 55—success of prayer in removing, iv. 56—reasons why permitted, iv. 57—merciful restrictions connected with, iv. 57. 58—are a proof that our days are evil, iv. 202—a great trial of true faith, iv. 379—are specially regarded by the kingdom of Christ, viii. 406—effect of, on the good and wicked man contrasted, viii. 449—various effects produced by, viii. 460—why they are the lot of the righteous, x. 102
- African Synod*, A. D. 254, decision of, on the subject of infant baptism, xii. 265
- Africans*, their confused notions of a supreme Being stated, vi. 432—awful superstition of the, vi. 433—representations of Wesleyan Missionaries concerning them, vi. 433, *et seq.*
- Agency*, all employed for the Son, ii. 297—nature of those brought into exercise by God, in judgment and mercy, iii. 478—moral, scriptural views of, iv. 245—all agencies are to be devoted to the service of the Most High, iv. 260—moral agency inconsistent with the doctrine of absolute predestination, vii. 252—the supernatural agency, which is at work in the salvation of man, viii. 460—human agency destroyed on the principle of John Calvin, xi. 462—moral agency defined, xii. 306
- Agrippa*, son of Herod, his character, vi. 250
- Albigenses*, origin of the, vii. 453
- Alexander* of Pontus, the pretended miracles of, ix. 232
- Alexander the Great* did not molest Judea, and why, vi. 121
- Alexandria*, present state of, vii. 338—character of the ancient school at, viii. 24
- Ali*, the proverbs of, a description of, vii. 383
- "*All men*," salvation attainable by, proved from the scriptures which declare that Christ "died for all," xi. 274—which attribute an equal extent to the effects of the death of Christ as to the fall, xi. 275—which declare that Christ died even for those who perish, xi. 276—which place under guilt those who do not believe, and reject the Gospel, xi. 276—which attribute the failure of men in obtaining salvation to their own fault, xi. 278—no passage of Scripture declares that Christ did *not* die for all, xi. 279—the Calvinistic restriction of the

- term "all men," considered, xi. 279
- All-sufficiency* of God, considered, x. 107
- Allegory* of St. Paul, respecting Isaac and Ishmael, vi. 279—explained, vii. 379
- Allen*, John, his "Modern Judaism," xii. 133
- Allix*, Peter, D.D., his "Judgment of the Jewish Church" referred to, vii. 27; x. 231
- Almsgiving*, not expressed by the word "charity" in our translation, iv. 387—inferior to charity, iv. 392
- Alphabet*, invention of the Cherokee, noticed, viii. 170
- Altar*, setting up an, a public act, ii. 409—instances of this fact, ii. 409, 410—objects contemplated in the erection of, ii. 410—worship of God described as a coming to the altar, iii. 141—approaching the, implies a recognition of sin, iii. 142—a liability to punishment, iii. 143—that God is propitious through an atonement, iii. 143—and assures us of access to God, iii. 144—great lesson taught by the altar in the sanctuary, iv. 172—the holy fire of, wanting in the second temple, vi. 120
- Ambassadors*, in what respect Christian Ministers are said to be, ii. 411
- Ambition*, a powerful temptation of Satan, iv. 38
- Ambrose*, on the practice of infant baptism, xii. 265
- Ambrosian chant*, the, a description of, viii. 322
- America*, progress of Methodism in, v. 217—fate of Mr. Wesley's Address to the Colonies of, v. 217—character of Methodism in that country, v. 218–220—revivals of religion there characterized, v. 218–221—state of the Methodist societies there, v. 261; viii. 340, 363—Mr. Wesley's ordination of Superintendents and Elders for, v. 262—tradition among the aboriginal inhabitants of, concerning the creation, noticed, vi. 49; ix. 48
- Amiens*, character of the peace of, vi. 376—notorious violation of the treaty of, by France, vi. 378
- Amory*, Rev. Thos., on the omnipresence of God, ix. 504–509
- Amos*, the chronological order of his prophecy, vi. 166
- Amphilochus*, Bishop of Iconium, his catalogue of the books of Scripture, mentioned, ix. 185
- Amyraldus*, Moses, an apologist of Calvin, xi. 414
- Anabaptists*, the rise of, in England and Germany, xii. 266
- Analogy*, difference between, and metaphor, vii. 312
- Ἀναφαιρω*, explained, xi. 34
- Anatomy*, secrets of, belong only to God, iii. 324
- Ancestors*, zeal of our, in the erection of places of worship, laudable, ii. 415
- Anchor*, why hope is said to be an, iv. 320
- Anderson*, Rev. Christopher, on the obligation of family worship, xii. 65, *et seq.*
- Andrews*, Bishop, on the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, v. 401; viii. 260; xi. 269
- Anecdote* of a poor woman in Wakefield, i. 147—an impatient hearer reproved, i. 168—of Mr. Watson's occasional difficulty in preparing for the pulpit, i. 192—of an injured negro mother, i. 213, 214—of a loquacious lady, i. 227—of Dr. A. Clarke, i. 296—of George the Fourth, i. 323—of the Rev. George Collison, i. 353—of Mr. Thomas Mann, a waterman, i. 363—of a slave of Grenada, i. 406—of the Rev. Barnabas Shaw, i. 464—of the Rev. Rowland Hill, i. 467—of a Greek widow, ii. 208—of Martin Luther, iv. 39—of Mr. Samuel Wesley's clerk, v. 26—of the Bristol Clergy, v. 75—of Beau Nash,

- v. 77—of Sir John Ganson, v. 100—of a Predestinarian, v. 102—of a Lincolnshire Justice of the Peace, v. 104—of Sir Edward Blackett, v. 126—of Rev. Charles Wesley, v. 201—of Dr. Samuel Johnson, v. 241—of a Member of Parliament, v. 251—of the Rector of Epworth, v. 303—of David Garrick, Esq., v. 305—of negroes, vi. 433, 434, 437, 439, 440, 461, 518, 526, 528—of Governor Seaton, vi. 481—of a West Indian Planter, vi. 510—of Abbé Dubois, modifying Christian doctrine, vii. 322—of Louis XIV., vii. 507—of a pagan Priest of the Sandwich Islands, viii. 106—of Kapiolani, viii. 110—of Napoleon, viii. 199—of a pious artisan of Languedoc, viii. 326—of Galen, ix. 411—of Quinctilian, x. 103—of Zaleucus, the Locrian lawgiver, xi. 56
- Angel of the church*, his office described, xii. 173—the angel of the Jewish synagogue, xii. 174
- *of the Lord*, Jacob wrestling with, considered vi. 69—the “Jehovah” of the Old Testament, x. 164—objections to this doctrine examined, x. 165, *et seq.*—ridiculous notion of Priestley respecting, x. 169—and of Belsham, x. 170—proved to be not God the Father, x. 171, *et seq.*—appeared under the Patriarchal and Levitical dispensations, x. 171, *et seq.*—appearances of, considered, x. 172—was the promised and future Christ, x. 173—identified with Jesus Christ in the former dispensations, x. 180—dwelt between the cherubim, x. 180
- Angels*, what they are, ii. 290—may be employed to convey to distant worlds the tidings of redemption, ii. 290—how they are concerned in the work of redemption, ii. 290—the part which they took in the accomplishment of that work, noticed, ii. 292—fellowship with angels, alluded to, ii. 376—bodies of men will be raised like unto the angels, ii. 393—were the agents employed in punishing the Israelites with pestilence, ii. 399—a term denoting the disembodied spirits of men, iii. 81—their anxiety respecting the soul of man, iii. 220—the term “angel,” applied to men, explained, iv. 159—specific objects of angelic ministry, iv. 164—deeply interested in the covenant of redemption, iv. 177—their activity and diligence, iv. 177—their connexion with the Christian system, one of moral benefit, iv. 179—are ministers to the church and to individuals, iv. 182—are under the government of God, iv. 241—affairs of this world are carried on by the ministry of, iv. 259—the mystery of this doctrine, iv. 260—the active benevolence of, iv. 338—the ministry of, under the law and Gospel contrasted, iv. 422—the instructive number of, iv. 422—joyous assembly of, in heaven, iv. 423—were created anterior to man, vi. 22—worship of angels prohibited, vi. 297—the doctrine of the Church of Rome on this subject condemned, vi. 297—the doctrine of the Platonic Jews alluded to, viii. 35—are not included in the plural appellations of the Deity, x. 138—the phrase “Angel of the Lord,” considered, x. 164—on the law ordained by, x. 187—sometimes termed “sons of God,” x. 240—they worship Christ, x. 322—distinction between “a spirit” and “an angel,” xii. 17. See *Angel of the Lord*.
- Anger*, how far lawful, xii. 104
- *of God*, only propitiated by sacrifice, ii. 404—Melancthon quoted on the, x. 32
- Animal life*, Bichat’s theory of, examined, ix. 477

- Animals*, distinction between clean and unclean, a proof of the early institutions of sacrifice, vi. 55—how they were preserved in the ark, vi. 56—Buffon, on the various species of, ix. 353—conjectures respecting those taken by Noah into the ark, ix. 354—on the extinct species of, ix. 354—on the use of those which are predatory and venomous, x. 63, *et seq.*—on the happiness of, x. 65
- Anna*, the prophetess, her character, vi. 220
- Annesley*, Rev. Samuel, noticed, v. 1, 2—enjoyed the witness of the Spirit, v. 85
- Annihilation* of the soul, an absurd doctrine, iii. 27—was not included in the death with which our progenitors were threatened, x. 441
- Anniversaries*, religious services of, how they ought to be sanctified, i. 332, 351—the proper spirit in which they should be conducted, ii. 370
- Anoint*, the phrase “to anoint the most Holy,” explained, iii. 391
- Anselm*, Archbishop, quoted, on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 208
- Antediluvians*, demoralized character of the, vi. 53—were well versed in mechanical arts, vi. 56—and in a state of high civilization, viii. 174
- Αντι*, “instead of,” illustrated, xi. 30
- Antichrist*, meaning of the term, vi. 322
- Anti-Slavery Society*, Mr. Watson’s views of the, 397—objects contemplated by the, 398
- Antinomianism*, its prevalence among the Moravians, v. 82—cause of the spread of, among the Calvinists, v. 228—Mr. Fletcher’s description of the ravages of, v. 229—the perverted views of, respecting the atonement of Christ, examined and refuted, xi. 75, *et seq.*—inconsistent with the notion of a conditional pardon, xi. 79—its notion of an eternal justification exploded, xi. 176—the views of, on imputed righteousness, examined and refuted, xi. 178, *et seq.*—scriptures which are supposed to establish these views, considered, xi. 192–194—its abuse of the doctrine of justification by faith, xi. 223
- Antioch*, Theophilus of, quoted, x. 185—the Synod of, referred to, x. 185
- Antiochus Epiphanes*, his persecution of the Jews, vi. 119, 127—his abandoned character, vi. 127—substitutes the orgies of Bacchus for the feast of tabernacles, vi. 128
- Antipædobaptists*, objection of, to the doctrine that baptism superseded circumcision, xii. 242—evasive criticisms of, on infant church-membership, xii. 253, *et seq.*—views of, on the baptism of houses or families, examined, xii. 258, *et seq.*—Peter Bruis, the first Antipædobaptist teacher, xii. 265
- Antiquity*, of the cross, a source of the Christian’s joy, iii. 57—is no excuse for error, iii. 58—of the Scriptures, considered, ix. 145, *et seq.*; xii. 333—the claim of, on behalf of some states, examined, ix. 340—testimony of, respecting the ancient form of baptism, x. 370
- Αντιτυπα*, explained, viii. 77
- Απαντασµα*, explained, vii. 41
- Απεκδυοµαι*, explained, viii. 302, 313
- Αφιηµι*, explained, xi. 62
- Αποκαταλλασσω*, explained, xi. 44
- Apollinarius*, the heretical tenets of, x. 344
- Apollonius Tyanæus*, the pretended miracles of, ix. 232
- Apostasy*, that predicted by the Apostles, the effects of, ii. 358—temptations of the Jewish Christians to, iv. 419; vi. 307—of the Church of Rome, described, vi. 300—guilt of, in

- the Jews of Palestine, vi. 311  
—the apostasies of the Jews predicted, ix. 255, *et seq.*; xii. 326
- Apostates*, case of those mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews, considered, xi. 288, *et seq.*
- Apostles*, how directed by the Holy Spirit, ii. 268—why they did not attempt to prove the divinity of Christ, ii. 284—what glory of Christ they beheld, during his humiliation, ii. 436—were divinely selected for their respective scenes of labour, ii. 446—prayers of the, are promises, ii. 458—in their preaching they clearly revealed the doctrine of sacrifice, iii. 59, 60—were qualified by the Almighty for their work, iii. 194—how the church is built upon the, iii. 287—their illumination and power the result of extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, iii. 380—were directed by the Spirit to their several fields of labour, iii. 460—their call to the Heathen noticed, iii. 463—their great use of sacrificial terms alluded to, iv. 277—were both doctrinal and practical in their discourses, vi. 186—meaning of the term, vi. 190—nature of their commission, vi. 217—book of the Acts of the, characterized, vi. 241—what was requisite to constitute an, vi. 284—success of the, contrasted with that of Mahomet, ix. 320—they paid divine worship to Christ, x. 315—are not chargeable with idolatry in worshipping Christ, x. 330—nature of their office in the primitive church, xii. 169, 209
- Apostles' Creed*, Witsius's dissertations on, &c., reviewed, vii. 493, *et seq.*—the antiquity and importance of, vii. 493, *et seq.*—on the use of creeds in general, vii. 494—the first and second object of creeds, specified, vii. 495—three classes of creeds defined, vii. 496—traced to the precincts of the apostolic age, vii. 497—when it was publicly used in the church, vii. 497—the character of this formulary, viii. 287
- Apparitions*, remarks on the alleged credulity of Mr. Wesley respecting, v. 345—Dr. Henry More's letter to the author of *Sadducismus Triumphatus*, quoted, v. 346, 503—disbelief in, an infidelity peculiar to modern times, v. 498—the fact of supernatural appearances, a scriptural doctrine, v. 499—testimony of Dr. Horneck concerning, v. 499—and of Dr. Henry More, v. 500—extracts from Jurieu's Pastoral Letters, respecting, v. 501—and from Andrew Baxter on "the Philosophy of Dreaming," v. 501—Mr. Wesley's belief in, justified, v. 501–504—moral uses of these appearances, v. 503—were credited by the ancient Jews, vi. 111—the re-appearance of Samuel, noticed, vi. 111—credulity and unbelief respecting them, are equally to be guarded against, vi. 111
- Apuleius*, his reference to Jesus Christ, alluded to, ix. 168
- Arabians*, prophecy respecting Ishmael accomplished in the, vi. 67
- Ararat*, the mountain of, where situated, vi. 54
- Araunah*, his exemplary character for zeal and liberality, ii. 414
- Arch*, triumphal, of Titus, interesting facts connected with it, vi. 209
- Archbishops*, origin of, in the church, xii. 177
- Argument*, *a priori* and *a posteriori*, explained, ix. 377–379, 387, *et seq.*—character of the proof *a priori*, ix. 453—comparative estimate of the two modes of proof, ix. 454, *et seq.*

- Arians*, the sentiments of, derogatory to the love of Christ, x. 124—in what sense they admitted the doctrine of atonement, x. 124—opinion of, on the term “Angel of the Lord,” x. 166—refuted by a Socinian writer, x. 168—on the term “God” as applied to Christ, x. 197—Waterland’s reply to, x. 197—the notions of, respecting this title, refuted, x. 200, *et seq.*—view of, on the eternity of the Son of God, x. 303—formerly branded with idolatry because of worshipping Christ, x. 329—the doctrine of superior and inferior worship, noticed, x. 331—have in this country generally merged into Socinianism, x. 356—their views of the Holy Spirit, x. 362—and of the death of Christ, xi. 24—their absurdity, xi. 25. See *Socinianism*.
- Aristeas*, the pretended miracles of, ix. 232
- Aristotle*, believed in the eternity of matter, ix. 27—his notions of a divine providence, ix. 65—did not countenance the doctrine of the soul’s immortality, ix. 72; xii. 313—his view of meekness, ix. 78; xii. 315—quoted on the constant dependence of all things upon the Creator, x. 294
- Ark* of Noah, a proof of the wisdom and power of God, vi. 56—capacity of the, considered, ix. 353; xii. 369
- Ark* of the testimony, why a type of the Gospel, ii. 471—it presented law in connexion with grace, ii. 472; iv. 171—it teaches a spiritual world and immortality, ii. 472—and the constant presence of God, ii. 472—it exhibits a grand evangelical type, iv. 170—why it contained the tables of the law, iv. 173—its continuance in Shiloh, vi. 103—it was wanting in the second temple, vi. 120—in what respects it was a propitiatory, xi. 40
- Arminianism* of the Rev. John Wesley, described, vii. 420, *et seq.*—differences between, and Calvinism, if not fundamental, are highly important, vii. 478
- Arminius*, James, D.D., on the scriptural doctrine of predestination, i. 465—interesting parallel between him and Rev. John Wesley, vii. 475. *et seq.*—his scriptural system of theology referred to, vii. 476—his theological education, vii. 482—his pulpit excellencies, vii. 482, 483—embraces sentiments opposed to those of Calvin, vii. 485—his view of the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, vii. 485—when his persecutions commenced, vii. 485—his exposition of the ninth of the Romans, noticed, vii. 486—is elected to the theological chair at Leyden, vii. 487—his character as a disputant, vii. 488—is charged with Pelagianism and Popery, vii. 490—Mr. Wesley’s opinion of his system of theology, vii. 490—his sickness and death, vii. 490—refutes the notion, that “God is the author of sin,” x. 83—on the effects of the fall, x. 436—on the doctrine of original sin, x. 480—and imputed righteousness, xi. 189—on the leading schemes of predestination, held by the Reformed Churches, xi. 418, *et seq.*
- Armour of light*, described, iv. 432, *et seq.*—why so termed, iv. 433—is heavenly in its origin, iv. 439—is only found connected with Christianity, iv. 439—is accordant with the Christian dispensation, iv. 441—awful state of those destitute of this armour, iv. 444—elevated character of those who possess it, iv. 445—the armour of the Christian, vi. 287
- Arnaud*, Henri, his enterprises



- in the valleys of Piedmont, al-  
luded to, vii. 462, 463
- Αποσταμενοι*, explained, v. 170
- Articles of the Church of England*,  
on the hypostatical union, x.  
344—on the procession of the  
Holy Spirit, x. 359—on the  
doctrine of original sin, x.  
439—and on justification by  
faith alone, xi. 220
- Asbury*, Rev. Francis, his charac-  
ter, as an American Method-  
ist Bishop, v. 267
- "*Ascending into heaven*," the So-  
cinian interpretation of this  
phrase, examined, x. 154
- Ascension of Christ*, the day of  
inauguration to regal dignity,  
ii. 304—was the glory which  
his disciples beheld, ii. 437—  
was one of the seals set by  
the Father to the mission of his  
Son, iii. 312—the fact of, cor-  
roborated and attested, iv. 77  
—circumstances attending this  
event, iv. 78—effects of, com-  
pared to ancient military tri-  
umphs, iv. 80—duty of man in  
reference thereto, iv. 85–87
- Ascetics*, great errors of the,  
vi. 357—the introduction of,  
into Russia, viii. 206
- Asconius*, on the term "satisfac-  
tion," xi. 72
- Asiatic churches*, sad monuments  
of disobedience, iii. 67
- Ass*, why ridden by the Saviour  
on entering Jerusalem, iii. 172
- Assembly of Divines at West-  
minster*, on the doctrines of  
election and predestination, xi.  
441
- Assembly's Catechism*, its defi-  
nition of repentance examined,  
vii. 196—and of prayer, xii. 55
- Assurance* in the hour of death,  
exemplified in Stephen, ii. 429  
—of divine favour vouchsafed  
to persevering piety, iii. 262—  
of our being *now* in a state of  
salvation possible, iv. 296—  
Southey's satirical animadver-  
sions on the doctrine of, v.  
86—the faith of, illustrated,  
v. 165—the doctrine of, de-  
fined, v. 171–180, 393—not  
the Calvinistic assurance of  
eternal salvation, v. 175; xi.  
254—essential to our consol-  
ation and peace, v. 176—is con-  
sonant with the services of the  
Church of England, v. 177—  
testimony in favour of the doc-  
trine, from Bishops Horsley,  
Hall, and Brownrigg, v. 178,  
179, 396 (n.)—Southey attri-  
butes the doctrine of, to enthu-  
siasm, v. 392—few Divines have  
denied the possibility of the  
doctrine, v. 397—Mr. Wesley's  
clear definition of it, v. 398—  
Bishop Hooper's testimony in  
favour of it, v. 400—of Bishops  
Andrews, Hall, and others, v.  
401–405—extract from the  
Homily on Faith, concerning, v.  
404—the necessity and import-  
ance of this branch of Christian  
truth, v. 405–408—Mr. Wes-  
ley's views of, defended, v.  
408–410; xi. 255—remarks on  
the use of the term, xi. 254—  
why it should be sparingly and  
cautiously used, xi. 254—the  
Antinomian notion of, refuted,  
xi. 255. See *Adoption, Witness  
of the Spirit*.
- Astronomical tables* adduced to  
refute the chronology of Scrip-  
ture, noticed, ix. 339
- Astronomy*, secrets of, belong  
only to God, iii. 323
- Athanasian Creed*, character of  
the, vii. 495—a quotation from,  
x. 146—on the hypostatical  
union, x. 344—and on the pro-  
cession of the Holy Spirit, x.  
359
- Athanasius*, quoted, on the books  
contained in the New Testa-  
ment, ix. 184
- Atheism* of the religion of Budhu,  
ix. 27—the argument in favour  
of the intelligence of the Di-  
vine Being confounding to  
Atheism, ix. 394, *et seq.*—on  
the absurdities of, ix. 398,  
446, 448, 472, *et seq.*—modern  
schemes of, noticed, ix. 449—  
the great credulity of, ix. 452

*Athenagoras*, objections of his day to the doctrine of the resurrection, viii. 44

*Athens*, the mysterious altar at, alluded to, iv. 187

*Atonement of Christ*, an important doctrine of the Scriptures, i. 439; vi. 258; xi. 165—benefits resulting therefrom, i. 440—the great consequence of the propitiatory death of Christ, ii. 75—the doctrine of, essential to the Christian system, ii. 279—efficacy of, proved by the divinity of Christ, ii. 284—antiquity of this doctrine, ii. 331—faith in the sufficiency of the, required, ii. 439—is the only means by which a way to God is kept open, iii. 71—adequacy of, to satisfy divine justice, iii. 115—in what its efficacy consisted, iii. 115, 116—would not be needed if man were innocent, iii. 142—assures us of access to God, iii. 144—acceptance of the doctrine by man, is a mark of a heart that is right, iii. 151—trust in, a principle of true worship, iii. 208—Daniel's description of the blessings flowing through, iii. 386, *et seq.*—a Socinian objection to the doctrine of, refuted, iv. 175—is the great subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews, iv. 275—a reason why this doctrine was so little understood among the Jews, vi. 130—is adapted to the wretched state of man, vi. 258—the doctrine of, on what it is founded, ix. 289—moral principles exhibited in, ix. 291, *et seq.*; xii. 353—its high consistency, ix. 298—and suitability, ix. 299—import of the terms “propitiate” and “atone,” xi. 33, 93—objection to the doctrine of, on the injustice of punishing the innocent for the guilty, answered, xi. 81—sacrifices of atonement a part of the religion of the Patriarchs, xi. 117—benefits

derived to man from the, considered, xi. 167, *et seq.*—the new relation in which it places man to God, xi. 167, *et seq.*—gives activity to the compassion of the Most High, xi. 168—the extent of, considered, xi. 273, *et seq.*

*Attraction* is a peculiar characteristic of the Gospel, viii. 550

*Attributes of Christ*, important nature of the, x. 288—of eternity, x. 289—of omnipresence, x. 291, *et seq.*—of the omniscience of Christ, x. 294—the knowledge of futurity, x. 300—omnipotence, x. 301

——— *God*, how they are calculated to impress the mind, ii. 337—his moral attributes, how displayed in Jesus Christ, iv. 135—the moral and intellectual, defined, vii. 307; x. 35—meaning of the term, ix. 461—figurative representations of, in Scripture, noticed, x. 30—the attributes fully considered, ix. 461; x. 108—important nature of the, x. 288—absurdity in viewing the Holy Spirit as merely an attribute of Deity, x. 372

——— *the Holy Spirit*, defined, x. 375

*Augsburg*, the Confession of, quoted, on the doctrines of election and predestination, xi. 443

*Augustine*, Saint, introduced into the Church a restricted view of the extent of the death of Christ, and the doctrine of the lawfulness of persecution, vii. 479—his catalogue of the books of Scripture, noticed, ix. 185—on the knowledge of evil spirits, ix. 224—on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 207—his character as a theologian, and the nature of his system, xi. 416—on the offices of “pastors and teachers,” xii. 170—on the nature of baptism, xii. 223—on the practice of infant baptism, xii. 265

*Authority* of the kingly power of Christ, viii. 528, *et seq.*

*Awakening*, spiritual, defined, xi.  
230

## B.

*Babel*, moral results consequent on the dispersion at, ix. 234

*Babylon*, salutary effect of the captivity in, upon the Jews, vi. 117—subversion of the empire of, vi. 118—import of the phrase “church at Babylon,” vi. 318—the capture of, by Cyrus, noticed, viii. 478; xii. 328—moral influence of the Jewish captivity on the inhabitants of, ix. 41—Rich’s “Memoirs of the Ruins of,” referred to, ix. 260; xii. 328

*Bacchus*, orgies of, substituted for the feast of tabernacles, by Antiochus, vi. 128

*Bacon*, Lord, quoted, on the presence of God in public worship, iii. 214—on the accomplishment of prophecy, iii. 233, 312; vi. 161

*Balaam* was not ignorant of the principles of true religion, ix. 40—the character of his enchantments, ix. 216—and also his personal character, ix. 271

*Balguy*, John, M.A., quoted, on the ground of moral obligation, ix. 93

*Band-meetings*, the rudiments of, were adopted by Mr. Wesley in Georgia, v. 36—Southey’s ignorant censures of, v. 485—nature of, described, v. 488—the principle on which these institutions are founded recognised in the Homily on Repentance, v. 489—and in Bishop Taylor’s “Holy Living,” v. 489—an erroneous statement concerning Mr. C. Wesley’s opinion of band-meetings corrected, v. 490

*Baptism*, a figurative rite of Christianity, ii. 327—a positive institution of the Christian religion, iii. 60—exhibits the equality of the Son with the Father, iii. 60—how children have a right to, iii. 78—is the

sign and seal of the new covenant, iii. 79—connexion with the church of Christ by baptism, not sufficient, iii. 153—the nature of this sacrament, vi. 211—why it was enjoined by our Lord, on believing, vi. 217—children not to be excluded from the ordinance, vi. 217—is immersion or affusion the most scriptural mode? vi. 218—the ancient form of, in the Church of Rome, referred to, vii. 456—the great baptism of the Russians on embracing Christianity, viii. 207—is a monument of the truth of Gospel history, ix. 161—the antiquity of, x. 369—the difference between Christian baptism and that of John, x. 369—the antiquity of the form of, x. 370—why it is termed a sacrament, xii. 213—the obligation of, xii. 222—view of the nature of, as held by the Church of Rome, xii. 222—by Augustine, xii. 223—by the Church of England, xii. 223—by the Quakers and Socinians, xii. 223—the covenant character of the ordinance, xii. 224, *et seq.*—the Abrahamic covenant considered, xii. 224—circumcision the sign and seal of that covenant, xii. 225—is to the new covenant what circumcision was to the old, xii. 231, *et seq.*—probable reason for the change, xii. 232—St. Peter’s views of Christian baptism, xii. 236, *et seq.*—the ancient practice of requiring a confession of faith at baptism, xii. 236—the phrase, “an answer of a good conscience toward God,” explained, xii. 236—in what respects it corresponds with circumcision, xii. 239—as a sign, xii. 239—and seal, xii. 241—is termed by St. Paul “Christian circumcision,” xii. 242—Antipædobaptist objection to the doctrine of the substitution of baptism for circumcision, xii. 242—na-

- ture of our Lord's baptism by his Apostles, xii. 243—proper subjects of baptism, xii. 244—arguments in favour of infant baptism adduced, xii. 244, *et seq.*—why baptism was instituted an ordinance of the church in preference to any other rite, xii. 245—an ancient rite in the Jewish Church, xii. 246—on Jewish baptism of proselytes, xii. 246—248—the baptism of houses or households, xii. 258—of the Philippian jailer, xii. 259—of Lydia, xii. 260—of Stephanas, xii. 261—benefits of, to the infant and adult, xii. 266—mode of baptism examined, xii. 267, *et seq.*—arguments proving that immersion is not the only legitimate mode, xii. 268—superstitious appendages to, xi. 269—validity of sprinkling recognised by the early church, xii. 270—import of the term “baptize,” xii. 272—John's baptism in Jordan fully considered, xii. 274, *et seq.*—the proofs adduced by immersionists examined, xii. 275, *et seq.*—use of baptism as an emblem, xii. 284—agreement and difference between baptism and the Eucharist, xii. 286. See *Infant Baptism, Circumcision.*
- Baptism of fire*, why the operations of the Holy Spirit are thus termed, iv. 327—a common privilege of the Christian, iv. 327
- Baptismal regeneration*, as held by the Church of England, defined, xii. 223
- Barbadoes*, persecution of Wesleyan Missionaries there, i. 378—the Rev. W. Shrewsbury's account of that transaction, i. 406—is brought by T. F. Buxton, Esq., before the British House of Commons, i. 408.
- Barchocheba*, a false Christ, ix. 226
- Beckley*, John, M.D., quoted, on the folly of materialism, ix. 478—and on the principle of life, ix. 480
- Barron*, Mr., his “Lectures on the Belles Lettres and Logic,” noticed, i. 53
- Barrow*, Isaac, D.D., quoted, on the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, v. 403; viii. 260; xi. 271—on the nature of God, ix. 369—and on the existence of three Persons in the Godhead, x. 147
- Basil*, Saint, on Christ being the Jehovah of the Old Testament, x. 186
- Bates*, William, D.D., on the wisdom of God in the scheme of redemption, x. 57
- Baxter*, Andrew, his essay “on the Philosophy of Dreaming,” quoted, v. 501
- , Rev. R., his religious societies at Kidderminster, v. 37 (n.)—his “History of the Councils,” alluded to, v. 211—quoted, on the moral effects produced by the plague on the inhabitants of London, v. 516—on the necessary existence of a First Cause, ix. 456—and on the doctrine of the Trinity, x. 111—his view of the doctrine of imputed righteousness, xi. 178, 191—on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 204—on the import of the term “righteousness,” xi. 211—the system of theology called “Baxterianism” defined, xi. 444, *et seq.*—on the case of the Heathen, xi. 448—the peculiarity of his theological scheme, xi. 452—objections to it, xi. 454, *et seq.*
- Baxterianism*, the system of theology so called, vii. 476; xi. 444, *et seq.*—its peculiarity, xi. 452, *et seq.*—objections to this scheme considered, xi. 454—Maclaine's remarks on, quoted, xi. 458
- Beast*, the vision of the, in the Apocalypse, iii. 103
- Beattie*, James, LL.D., on the comparative insignificance of

- man, no argument against revelation, ix. 335—on the providence of God, ix. 338—on the moral connexion of this world with universal intelligence, ix. 338—his "Evidences of the Christian Religion," quoted, ix. 339
- Bede*, the Venerable, quoted, on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 208
- "*Begotten*," the propriety of the term, as applied to the Son of God, examined, vii. 79, *et seq.*—remarks on the phrase, "This day have I begotten thee," x. 227, *et seq.*
- Behmen*, Jacob, his character as an expositor, viii. 73
- "*Believing the Gospel*," import of the phrase, xi. 294
- Bellarmino*, Cardinal, on the value of the merit of Christ, xi. 246
- Belsham*, Thomas, instance of perversion of Scripture by, x. 152, 155—on "ascending into" and "coming down from heaven," x. 152, 153, 155—his absurd view of the term "Angel of the Lord," x. 170—finds fault with the style of the Apostles, x. 372
- Belshazzar*, the appearance of the hand-writing to, viii. 482
- Belzoni*, M., his model of an Egyptian tomb, vii. 345
- Benediction*, the Apostolic, what it was, vi. 277; x. 328—the Jewish form of, considered, x. 140—of the Apostles, a proof of the Deity of Christ, x. 328
- Benevolence*, a pleasure peculiar to man, ii. 70—powerfully inculcated in the Scriptures, ii. 352—foundation of, laid in gratitude, ii. 354—the love of Christ the moving cause of, ii. 355—motives to, are addressed to our hope, ii. 355—others to our prudence, ii. 357—some are drawn from the fitness of the thing, ii. 360—and others from human mortality, ii. 361—objections to its exercise considered, ii. 362—is a distinguishing feature in the man who does not live to himself, iii. 6—and a powerful principle in Christian devotedness, iii. 13—is a moral effect of the doctrine of the cross, iii. 64—and a distinguishing feature of the Gospel, iii. 409—possesses the force of duty and obligation, iv. 339—of Christ, iv. 450—of Christ toward Jerusalem, vi. 205—obligation of, not indicated by works, &c., of God, ix. 13—rule by which Christian benevolence should be exercised, xii. 106
- Benevolence of God*, is a proof in favour of the salvation of infants, iii. 76—on the activity given to the, by the atonement of Christ, xi. 168
- Bennett*, James, D. D., the unsanctified spirit which is displayed in his "History of the Dissenters," v. 241
- Benson*, George, D. D., his opinion respecting the Epistle of Jude, vi. 323—his character as an expositor, viii. 72—on calling on the name of Christ, x. 321—and on the baptism of Jewish proselytes, x. 368
- , Rev. Joseph, his admiration of the preaching of Mr. Watson, i. 187—the death and characteristic sketch of, i. 323–325; viii. 351—his statement of the last days and death of the Rev. J. Wesley, v. 308–314—his "Sermons and Plans of Sermons," reviewed, vii. 467–473—their unsatisfactory character, vii. 468—his style as a preacher, vii. 469, 473—was an excellent textuary, vii. 471—his mode of employing his criticisms, vii. 471—inseparably united doctrinal with experimental truth, vii. 472
- Bentley*, Richard, D. D., on the preservation of the Scriptures, ix. 186, *et seq.*—and on the comparative insignificance of man being no argument against the truth of revelation, ix. 335

- Berridge*, Rev. John, his coarse virulence and buffoonery as a controvertist, v. 240
- Bertius*, his oration on the death of Arminius, alluded to, vii. 481—his description of the pulpit excellencies of Arminius, vii. 482—on the state of religion in the Low Countries, vii. 484—his account of the election of Arminius to the Theological chair, vii. 487—of his conduct when in it, vii. 487—and his description of his last illness, vii. 491. See *Arminius*.
- Beryl*, the colour of, described, iv. 261
- Bethany*, why a favourite place of our Lord's, iv. 79—nature of the blessing which Christ there gave to his disciples, iv. 79—where it was situated, vi. 175
- Bethlehem*, where situated, vi. 176
- Bethphage*, where situated, vi. 175
- Beza*, Theodore, doctrines taught by, at Geneva, vii. 480—on the term "Spirit of Holiness," as applied to the divine nature of Christ, x. 248—on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 210—and on the phrase, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," xi. 314
- Biban el Molouk*, a description of, vii. 344—Champollion's account of, viii. 185, *et seq.*—description of a tomb discovered there, ix. 49
- Bible*, the, import of the term, xii. 304—why called "The Old and New Testament," xii. 305
- Bible Society*, British and Foreign, Mr. Watson's speech at an Anniversary of, i. 215–217—a remarkable interposition of divine Providence in the establishment of, ii. 359—an Auxiliary Society instituted at Novgorod, viii. 194—flourishing state of, in the diocese of Orel, viii. 200—and at Kharkof, viii. 202
- Bichat*, M., his theory of life, examined, ix. 476—his "Recherches sur la Vie et la Mort," quoted, ix. 477
- Bigotry*, awful effect of, displayed in France, iv. 249—evils of religious bigotry, iv. 342—absurdity of, in forms of church government, v. 459
- "*Bind and loose*," import of the phrase, as implied in the commission of the Apostles, xii. 207, 208
- Biography* of Scripture, the character of, ii. 254—remarks upon, in general, vii. 407
- Biot*, Mons., on the zodiac of Dendera, vii. 343; ix. 340; xii. 368
- Birthright of Esau* described, vi. 68
- Bishop*, identity of the order of, with that of Priest, v. 264–266; vi. 285; xii. 171, *et seq.*—the controversy concerning the order of Bishop and Presbyter, alluded to, xii. 171—when the distinction between Bishops and Presbyters took place in the church, and why, xii. 172, 173—no proof that ordaining to the ministry was given to the Bishops to the exclusion of the Presbyters, xii. 172—the argument for the succession of, noticed, xii. 179—catalogues of Bishops from the days of the Apostles, a forgery, xii. 180—the ancient office of, defined, xii. 181—Bishop Tomline quoted on the order of Bishops, &c., as distinguished from those of the early church, xii. 183. See *Episcopacy*, *Presbyterianism*.
- Blackwell*, Anthony, his "Sacred Classics Illustrated and Defended," noticed, v. 275—his remark on the prayer of St. Paul for the church at Ephesus, vi. 283
- Biasphemy* in making God the author of sin, x. 82—in what sense the Jews charged it upon Christ, x. 245
- against the Holy Ghost,

- defined, vi. 226; x. 374—a specific crime, vii. 257
- Blessing the Sabbath*, import of the phrase, vi. 29
- Blessings*, earthly, how far promised to the righteous, iii. 10—nature of the blessing given by Christ to his disciples, at Bethany, iv. 79—are communicated through the medium of worship, iv. 489—object of the kingdom of Christ to impart, viii. 408
- Blonde's*, the, "Voyage to the Sandwich Islands," reviewed, viii. 96—character of the work, viii. 96—by whom it was compiled, viii. 96—object of the voyage, viii. 97
- Blood* and water were instruments of purification under the law, iii. 377, 396—why the use of it for food was prohibited, vi. 57—the phrase "to come by blood," considered, viii. 56—further reasons for the prohibition of blood as food, xi. 118—was considered sacred to pagan deities, xi. 120
- *of Christ*, the efficacy of, ii. 407—superior value of the, iii. 114—in what respects it was the blood of God, iii. 116—how it purifies the conscience, iii. 119—sprinkling the mercy-seat considered, iv. 175—how it is the price of redemption, xi. 56. See *Atonement*, *Sacrifice*.
- *of sprinkling*, the phrase explained, iv. 429
- Blount*, Charles, the infidel, moral character of, ix. 312
- Blumenbach*, M., his argument in proof that all nations of men have descended from the same pair, vi. 51
- Blunt*, J. J. Rev., his "Veracity of the Books of Moses," &c., reviewed, vii. 350–358—his curious conjectures concerning Esau's "goodly raiment," vii. 353—his views of the ancient patriarchal church, examined, vii. 354
- Bogue*, David, D.D., the unsanctified spirit in his "History of Dissenters," v. 241
- Bohler*, Peter, his interesting interviews with Mr. Wesley, v. 50, 51
- Bolingbroke*, Lord, quoted, on a revelation of the will of God, ix. 12—his infidel opinion concerning Christ, ix. 263—his moral character, ix. 312
- "*Book of life*," import of the phrase, xi. 389
- Booth*, Abraham, objection of, to the doctrine of the substitution of baptism for circumcision, considered, xii. 242
- Borlase*, Dr., the historian of Cornwall, the persecuting spirit of, v. 141
- "*Born again*," the antiquity of the phrase, iv. 407—"born of the Spirit," what, iv. 411—its scriptural import, xi. 230. See *Regeneration*, *New Birth*.
- "*Born of God*," import of the phrase, viii. 54
- Bourbon*, intolerant character of the house of, vii. 447
- Bowditch*, Mr., his "Account of Ashantee," referred to, on the prevalence of human sacrifice, ix. 83
- Boyle*, the Hon. Robert, quoted, on the evidence of prophecy, ix. 120—and on final causes, ix. 403
- Brahminical system*, erroneous notions of the, concerning the soul, ix. 28
- Branch*, the, a prophetic appellation given to the Messiah, iii. 124—import of the term, iii. 124—was descriptive of Christ's character and work, iii. 125—and of his secret operations in the human heart, iii. 126
- Brandt*, Gerard, his account of the conduct of Arminius in the theological chair, vii. 488—and of his last illness, vii. 491
- Breastplate of righteousness*, described, iv. 433
- Bretschneider*, Ch. Theo., D.D., his account of the effects of ra-

- tionalism on the people of Germany, vii. 180
- Broken spirit*, a concomitant of true faith, ii. 460
- Brosses*, de, Abbé, his idea on the human invention of language, vi. 61
- Brown*, Dr. William, his "History of the Propagation of Christianity," quoted, vi. 461, 469—on the moral character of converted negroes, vi. 469—an error into which he has fallen, corrected, vi. 469
- , Rev. William Lawrence, D.D., his "Comparative View of Christianity," &c., reviewed, viii. 3–11—plan of the work, viii. 6—on the corruptions of the Christian religion, viii. 6—his notions of the failure of Christianity, combated, viii. 8, *et seq.*—his defective views of saving faith, viii. 11
- Browne*, Bishop, on analogy and metaphor, vii. 312—his "Procedure of human Understanding," quoted on the theory of Archbishop King, x. 29
- , Thomas, LL.D., on the relation between cause and effect, ix. 383
- Brownell*, Rev. John, a Wesleyan Missionary, brutally assaulted by a Magistrate in the island of Tortola, vi. 475
- Brownrigg*, Bishop, on the doctrine of assurance, v. 179, 396, 402; viii. 260; xi. 270—his "sermon on Whitsunday" quoted, v. 402—on the personal and appropriating character of faith, xi. 258
- Bruis*, Peter, the first Antipædobaptist teacher, xii. 265
- Bruti*, the, originated the gladiatorial combats, ix. 76; xii. 314
- Bryant*, Jacob, his "Heathen Mythology" alluded to, ix. 50—his account of Zoroaster and the Zend, ix. 53
- Bucer*, Martin, quoted, on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 209
- Buchanan*, the Rev Claudius, his Christian researches in Asia noticed, ii. 478—is referred to, on the prevalency of human sacrifices, ix. 83
- Budhu*, Priests of, the visit of two, to England, i. 243—who are placed under the care of Dr. Clarke, from whom they receive baptism, i. 245—their character, and return to the island of Ceylon, i. 245—Mr. Harvard's account of Budhuism, alluded to, vii. 334
- Budhuism*, Harvard's account of, vii. 334—the practical atheism of, ix. 27—Davy's account of the doctrines of, ix. 29—offering of sacrifice common in the ancient form of, ix. 51
- Buenos Ayres*, establishment of schools in, viii. 217, *et seq.*—circulation of the Scriptures there, viii. 223, *et seq.*
- Buffon*, M., on the different species of animals, ix. 353
- Bull*, Bishop, influence of his writings on Mrs. Samuel Wesley, v. 3—his "Harmonia Apostolica," noticed, v. 224—on the term "Person," x. 113—on the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity, x. 123—on the deity of Jesus, x. 132—on the Arian interpretation of the term "Angel of the Lord," x. 167—on the title "God," applied to Christ, x. 210—on the phrase "only begotten of the Father," x. 239—on the term "Son of God" being a title implying divinity, x. 244—on the term "Spirit of Holiness," as applied to the divine nature of Christ, x. 247—on the fearful consequences of rejecting the eternal sonship of Christ, x. 256–258—his successful opposition to Dr. S. Clarke, x. 357—his theory of justification examined and refuted, xi. 233, *et seq.*—on the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, xi. 256—his sentiments refuted, xi. 261
- Bullinger*, Henry, quoted, on the



- imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 209
- Bunting, Jabez, D. D.**, commencement of his acquaintance with Mr. Watson, i. 101—his sermon on the death of Mr. Watson, noticed, i. 621—is quoted on the scriptural doctrine of justification, xi. 176—and on justifying faith, xi. 219
- Burckhardt, John Lewis**, on the mode of obtaining wives in the east, vi. 69
- Burden**, import of the phrase as used by the Jews, iii. 253
- Burder, Henry Foster, M. A.**, his "Lectures on the Essentials of Religion," reviewed, vii. 189—199—his mode of stating some Christian doctrines examined, vii. 195, 196
- Burial places** of the ancients, described, vi. 68
- Burmese**, character of the, viii. 85, *et seq.*—history of the campaign against Burmah, viii. 87—deceptive conduct of the, noticed, viii. 88—their superstition, viii. 90—and mode of warfare, viii. 91—fearful instances of oppression among the, viii. 91, *et seq.*—general characteristics of the people, viii. 93, *et seq.*—prospects of the success of Christian Missions in Burmah, viii. 95
- Burnet, Bishop**, his account of the church at the Reformation, v. 62—quoted, on the authority of the church in matters of controversy, xii. 202—and on the distinction between sacraments and other religious rites, xii. 213
- , Dr. Thomas, on the opinions of the ancient philosophers, ix. 27
- Burton, Rev. Edward, D. D.**, his "Inquiry into the Heresies of the Apostolic Age," reviewed, viii. 18—69—character of the work, viii. 18—his strong attachment to his theory, viii. 18—the leading design of the inquiry, viii. 21—attributes
- Gnosticism to Simon Magus, viii. 27—his illustrations of Scripture examined, viii. 30, *et seq.*—his strange interpretation of some passages, viii. 39, *et seq.*—his idea that Paul's remarks on the resurrection, to the Corinthians, alluded to the Gnostic heresy, combated, viii. 40—denies the resurrection of the same identical body, viii. 46—an absurd explanation of Scripture made to refer to the Docetæ, noticed, viii. 49—his account of Cerinthus and Ebion, viii. 51—unsound criticism of, viii. 53—his interpretation of 1 John, 5, 6, examined, viii. 54, *et seq.*—on the influence of Platonism on the early fathers, viii. 59—defends Justin Martyr from the Socinian calumny, viii. 61—on the use of the term "Logos," viii. 62—on the Socinian claim to antiquity, viii. 65, *et seq.*
- Butler, Charles, Esq.**, character of, as a writer, vii. 447
- , Joseph, Bishop, successfully combats certain erroneous positions of Dr. S. Clarke in his "Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God," i. 380—quoted, on the moral government of the Deity, ix. 7—on the righteous administration of God, ix. 16—on the ground of moral obligation, ix. 93—on the external evidence of revelation, ix. 99, 100—on the credibility of miracles, ix. 103—on the doctrine of atonement, ix. 289—on moral liberty, x. 86, 420—on the distinction between a moral and a positive precept, x. 423—and on the inability of repentance to change the relation of the guilty toward God, xi. 17—his notice of the Reformed church, quoted, xi. 415
- , Samuel, Bishop, his contrast between Socrates and Christ, censured, x. 8
- Butterworth, Joseph, Esq., M. P.**,

- defends the Wesleyan Missionaries in the House of Commons against the aspersions of several of the members, i. 209—receives the thanks of the Wesleyan Conference for his parliamentary support, i. 412—his death, and characteristic sketch, i. 429—his funeral oration, i. 430; ii. 131—his conversion, ii. 135—religious character, ii. 136—fidelity as a Class-Leader, ii. 138—attention to the young, ii. 139—zeal in the promotion of the religious institutions of the country, ii. 143—philanthropy, ii. 145—attention to foreigners, ii. 146—his public character, ii. 148—member of Parliament, ii. 150—154—his opinion on the claims of the Roman Catholics, ii. 152—on the slave question, ii. 153—the contested election at Dover, ii. 155—his illness and death, ii. 156—public mark of respect to his memory at Dover, ii. 157
- Buxton*, T. F., Esq., M. P., brings the case of the persecution of the Wesleyan Missionary at Barbadoes before the House of Commons, i. 408—is presented with the thanks of the Wesleyan Conference, i. 411—Mr. Watson's letter to, on the subject of negro emancipation, i. 590
- Buxtorf*, John, on the word "Jehovah," x. 135
- , John, jun., his opposition to the popular argument in favour of the Trinity, x. 138
- "*By him all things consist*," meaning of the phrase, x. 294
- Byron*, Lord, Right Honourable, Commander of the Blonde frigate, viii. 96
- C.
- Cabbala*, character of that system of philosophy, viii. 24—the theory of the, viii. 29
- Cæsarea*, where situated, vi. 176
- Cæsarea Philippi*, where situated, vi. 176, 228—St. Paul's protracted continuance there, vi. 250
- Cain*, the reason of his offering being rejected, iii. 71; xi. 124—observations on the mark of, vi. 52; ix. 234—his descendants noticed, vi. 52; ix. 234—the inefficacy of his eucharistic offering accounted for, xi. 159, *et seq.*
- Caius*, the Roman lawyer, on the term "satisfaction," xi. 72
- Calamy*, Edmund, D.D., his "Abridgment of Baxter's Life," noticed, v. 211.
- Caliya*, the serpent of the Hindoo mythology, ix. 49
- "*Called, the*," import of the term, viii. 454, xi. 366, *et seq.*
- Callicratidas*, his lax views of the evil of fornication, ix. 79
- "*Calling*," "call," or "called," general meaning of the terms, xi. 366—the Calvinistic phrase, "effectual calling," not countenanced in Scripture, xi. 366—its application to the Gospel system, xi. 368—the text on which Calvinists ground the doctrine of "effectual calling," examined, xi. 369, *et seq.* See *Election*.
- Calvin*, John, quoted on the doctrine of unconditional reprobation, i. 465—on the precedence of the direct witness of the Spirit of God, to the indirect witness of our own, v. 182, 404—his treatment of Servetus, noticed, v. 225—the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit held by the old Divines of his school, v. 405—on the descent of Christ into hell, viii. 294—on the natural state of man, x. 440—in what original sin consists, x. 482—on the doctrine of traduction, x. 487—his view of the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ, xi. 186—and of justification, xi. 188, 202—these views investigated,

- xi. 191, *et seq.*—on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 209—on the salvation of infants, xi. 355—his sentiments on election and predestination stated and considered, xi. 405, *et seq.*—his evasive method of replying to objections, noticed, xi. 407—does not ground the doctrine of predestination on the foreknowledge of God, xi. 407—contends for the necessity of sinning in man, xi. 411—sketch of the history of, xi. 415—his view of Episcopacy noticed, xii. 180—and of the eucharist, xii. 293
- Calvinism* imposes unjustifiable restraints on Christian Ministers, i. 466—the moral tendency of the Calvinistic theory, far from salutary, i. 467—controversy on the doctrines of, among the Methodists, v. 226—cause of this controversy, v. 227—how Calvinism tends to the Antinomian heresy, v. 228—the buffoonery and abuse of many of the advocates of, v. 240, 455—benefits resulting from the Calvinistic controversy, v. 243, 454—has firmly maintained the doctrine of justification by faith, vii. 420—Methodist doctrine, as compared with that of Calvinism, considered, vii. 421, *et seq.*—the general ignorance of Arminius among the Calvinists, vii. 475—its withering influence on vital and practical godliness, vii. 477—differences between, and Arminianism, if not fundamental, are highly important, vii. 478—is a mischievous corruption of Christianity, vii. 479—has not been the depository of the great truths of the Gospel, vii. 479—early doctrines of, vii. 480—bitterness of, toward those who hold Arminian sentiments, vii. 485—has charged God with being the author of evil, x. 82—the abandonment of this dogma, by many modern Calvinists, x. 83—on the doctrine of original sin, x. 440—view of, on imputed righteousness, examined, xi. 188, 192—scriptures supposed to be in favour of the doctrine, considered, xi. 192, *et seq.*—character of the Calvinistic controversy, xi. 273—importance of appeals to Scripture in, xi. 274—Calvinistic views of the case of the apostates mentioned in the Hebrews, considered, xi. 290—inconsistent with the doctrine of the entire depravity of man, xi. 294—view of that faith which is required of all, xi. 297—a favourite resort of Calvinism to implication and inference, xi. 302—doctrines of, on election and predestination, stated, xi. 405, *et seq.*—peculiarities of, unknown in the primitive church, xi. 415—Bishop Tomline's Refutation of, noticed, xi. 238, 416—similarity of, to many of the early heresies, xi. 416—John Goodwin's remarks on the doctrines of, xi. 421—remarks on the origin of, xi. 460—the system of, destructive of human agency, xi. 462—views of the divine sovereignty as held by Calvinists, considered, xi. 488—it has uniformly advocated the continuance of indwelling sin until death, xii. 6
- Calvinistic controversy* lies within a small compass, i. 465—cause of its commencement among the early Methodists, v. 226—character of the, xi. 273—importance of appeal to the Scriptures in the, xi. 274—the fact that Christ died for all men, proved to be a doctrine of Scripture, xi. 274, *et seq.*—the Calvinistic interpretation of the terms "all men" and "the world," considered, xi. 279—the gross absurdity of restricting the meaning of these terms, xi. 282—scriptures examined

which are supposed to favour such restriction, xi. 283—fearful consequences if such restriction be true, xi. 284—the Calvinistic view of those texts which speak of Christ dying for them that perish, considered, xi. 384, *et seq.*—their absurd mode of evading their force, xi. 286—the case of the apostates mentioned in the Hebrews, considered, xi. 288, *et seq.*—the universality of the command to believe, considered, xi. 296—a quotation from the Synod of Dort, on this subject, xi. 298—the non-salvation of man attributed to himself, xi. 299—the question considered, xi. 300, *et seq.*—the doctrine of the freedom of the will, noticed, xi. 301—the notion of a secret and revealed will of God, exploded, xi. 301, *et seq.*—passages which, according to a Calvinistic inference, limit the extent of the efficacy of the death of Christ, examined, xi. 302, *et seq.*—Scripture views of the terms “election, foreknowledge, and predestination,” xi. 303, *et seq.*—illustrations of the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans, xi. 311, *et seq.*—important object in St. Paul’s reference to the parable of the potter, xi. 321—objections to these illustrations considered, xi. 335, *et seq.*—the end contemplated in the election of bodies of men, xi. 342—the doctrine of personal election, examined, xi. 345—the notion of an eternal personal election, exploded, xi. 346, *et seq.*—judgment of the Synod of Dort on the doctrine of election, referred to, xi. 347—the doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation irreconcilable with the perfections of the Godhead, xi. 350, *et seq.*—personal election not irrespective of faith, xi. 357—scriptures where the term

“election” is employed, considered, xi. 358, *et seq.*—meaning of the terms “calling” and “election,” xi. 366, *et seq.*—effectual calling, what the Calvinists mean by, xi. 366, 369—passages of Scripture supposed to limit the extent of the efficacy of the death of Christ, examined, xi. 378, *et seq.*—degrees in which the grace of God is imparted to man, considered, xi. 396, *et seq.*—theories which limit the extent of the death of Christ, examined, xi. 404, *et seq.*—Calvin’s sentiments on election and predestination, stated and considered, xi. 405, *et seq.*—supralapsarian and sublapsarian schemes of predestination fully examined, xi. 423, *et seq.*—decision of the Synod of Dort on the doctrine of predestination, xi. 432—the system of theology termed Baxterianism, considered, xi. 444, *et seq.*—the scheme of Dr. Williams, noticed, xi. 459—import of the term “decree,” xi. 461—their nature and character, xi. 463—on the divine prescience, xi. 470, *et seq.*—on the freedom of the will, xi. 478, *et seq.*—the divine sovereignty, considered, xi. 488—on the Calvinian idea of the irresistibility of grace, xi. 493—the inconsistency of the Calvinistic hypothesis exposed, xi. 495, *et seq.*

*Cameron*, John, on the term “Spirit of holiness,” applied to the divine nature of Christ, x. 248—his view of the doctrine of imputed righteousness, alluded to, xi. 178—his system of theology, noticed, xi. 445

*Campbell*, Rev. John, his “Travels in South Africa,” alluded to, ix. 48

*Campbell*, George, D.D., F.R.S., his refutation of Hume on miracles, ix. 108, 114—on the

- pretended heathen miracles, ix. 232—his "Translation of the Gospels," quoted, x. 238—on the intermediate and separate state of the soul, xii. 14
- Canaan*, its division among the tribes of Israel by lot, alluded to, iii. 31—being secured to the Israelites, was typical of heaven secured to the Christian, iii. 31, 32—was divided according to the character of the possessors, iii. 32—an eminent type of heaven, iii. 442, 445—the idolatrous practices of the inhabitants of, vi. 100—their extermination, vi. 100; ix. 328
- Canaanites*, the command for the extermination of the, considered, xii. 364
- Capernaum*, where situated, vi. 176
- Cappe*, Rev. Newcome, his "Critical Remarks," &c., quoted, x. 219
- Captivity*, moral effects of the captivity of the Jews in Babylon on the inhabitants of that country, ix. 41—and also upon the Israelites, vi. 117; ix. 55—predictions concerning this captivity, considered, ix. 257—nature of the carnal man's captivity to the devil, xi. 56
- Care of God*, toward man, shown in the material world, ii. 199—and in works of providence, ii. 200—of Christ toward his people, iv. 535
- Carey*, Dr., his efforts to convert the Heathen, iii. 463
- Carnal mind*, import of the phrase, ii. 305—its enmity characterized, xi. 45
- Carlostadt*, his view of the eucharist, xii. 291—and its defects, xii. 293
- Cases of conscience*. See *Casuistry*.
- Cassian*, the monk, his theological system, xi. 417
- Casuistry*, systems of, observations on the evil tendency of, xii. 37—abounded in the Church of Rome, xii. 38—M. le Feore's just description of, xii. 38
- Catacombs*, of Kief, in Russia, described, viii. 203, *et seq.*—their origin, viii. 206
- Catalogues*, various, of the books of Scripture, referred to, ix. 184, *et seq.*
- Catechism*, of the evidences of Christianity, &c., xii. 303—value of such, in the instruction of youth, i. 387
- Catechumens*, character of, in the primitive church, v. 101
- Catholic*, the Church of Rome has no right to the term, vii. 447, 454—the inconsistency of Protestants, in applying this term to that Church, vii. 454
- Catholic Mission* in India, history of the, vii. 315—the wretched conduct of the Missionaries, described, vii. 315—and their idolatrous conformity to Paganism, exhibited, vii. 316—complaints of, made to the Pope; their result, vii. 316—causes of the complete failure of the Mission, specified, vii. 317
- Catholic spirit*, extract from Mr. Wesley's sermon on a, v. 119—121
- Cause and effect*, meaning of the terms, ix. 380, *et seq.*—theory of David Hume respecting, considered, ix. 380, *et seq.*—just view of their relationship, ix. 385
- Cave*, William, D.D., quoted, on the government of the early church, xii. 177, *et seq.*—and on the part which the people took in the ordination of Christian Ministers, xii. 192
- Celsus*, his testimony to the truth of Gospel history, ix. 168; xii. 341
- Cerberus*, of the poets, origin of the, viii. 185
- Cerinthus*, who he was, vi. 320—his leading error refuted by St. John, vi. 321—an account of, viii. 51—statement of the tenets of, viii. 66; x. 213, 281

- Certainty*, explanation of the term, x. 15
- Ceylon*, island of, success of the Wesleyan Mission in the, vii. 327, 330—character of Cingalese Paganism, vii. 329—providential opening of, to the Wesleyan Missionaries, vii. 332—the Buddhism of, vii. 333—no divine Providence recognised by the Cingalese, ix. 67—notions of futurity, as held by, ix. 71—the prevalence of demon worship in the, ix. 223
- Chalcedon*, Council of, on the hypostatical union, x. 344 ; xii. 200—when held, xii. 200—the heresy which it refuted, xii. 200
- Chaldean philosophy*, character of the, ix. 67
- Chalmers*, Thomas, D.D., his discourses on “the Application of Christianity to the Commercial,” &c., “Affairs of Life,” reviewed, vii. 227–237—his character as a Divine, vii. 228, 238—a defect in his statement of the doctrine of natural depravity, examined, vii. 230, *et seq.*—his notion of constitutional virtues instinctive to man, refuted, vii. 232, *et seq.*—its unscriptural character, vii. 236—his “Sermons preached in St. John’s Church, Glasgow,” reviewed, vii. 238–257—his vague statements of the doctrine of predestination, vii. 241—is exhibited by him, in its most exceptionable and dangerous form, vii. 242—the fatal results to which he is driven, vii. 243, *et seq.*—his mode of reconciling absolute predestination with practical religion, examined, vii. 245, *et seq.*—his illogical reasoning on this subject, vii. 248—his inconsistency as a Divine, even upon his own principles, vii. 250—his “Christian and Civic Economy of large Towns,” reviewed, vii. 264–290—his plan of ameliorating the moral condition of the community, vii. 276—his view of religious establishments, vii. 289—on the dispersion of the Jews, ix. 258—his “Discourses on Modern Astronomy,” referred to, ix. 339—his “Evidences of the Christian Revelation,” quoted, ix. 343
- Champollion*, M., on the zodiac of Dendera, vii. 343—his success in hieroglyphical researches, viii. 167—his work, *Précis du Système Hiéroglyphique*, noticed, viii. 168—has abundantly corroborated the truth of Scripture history, viii. 175, *et seq.*
- Chance*, is excluded by revelation from the affairs of the world, iv. 267
- Chandler*, Bishop, his vindication of Daniel’s prophecy, ix. 269
- Chandler*, Samuel, D.D., his defence of the prophecy of Daniel, ix. 269
- Change in God*, in what respects it is not inconsistent with immutability, x. 43
- Chaotic state*, formation of the world from the, ix. 47—opinions of geologists concerning the, ix. 344
- Chapel-fund*, General, the formation and the principles of this institution stated, i. 246—the first Report of the, i. 283–287 ; viii. 373—its beneficial tendency on the Wesleyan Connexion, i. 286 ; viii. 333, 342, 376—the great claims for relief from the fund, viii. 342
- Chapels*, erection of places of public worship, one of the greatest of charities, i. 283 ; viii. 373—influences of, upon the piety, philanthropy, and patriotism of the nation, i. 284 ; viii. 375—causes of pecuniary embarrassment in connexion with, i. 285 ; viii. 375—such cases peculiarly worthy of Christian sympathy and assistance, i. 285, 286 ; viii. 376

- Mr. Southey's error respecting the settlement of Methodist chapels, v. 492—importance of the erection of, viii. 374—usual method of erecting, among Methodists, viii. 375—pecuniary embarrassment of, not always censurable, viii. 376
- Chapman, John, D.D.*, on the evidence of prophecy, ix. 120—his comparison of miracle and prophecy, or evidence, ix. 124
- Χαρακτηρ*, explained, vii. 41; x. 250
- Character of God*, described, ix. 365, *et seq.*
- Chariots of war*, why the use of, was forbidden to the Jews, iii. 173
- Charity*, exercise of, laws which should regulate the, ii. 348—is powerfully inculcated in the Scriptures, ii. 352—and exemplified in Stephen, at his martyrdom, ii. 430—charity to the souls of men, an expansive principle, iii. 6—constituting the substance of true religion, described, iv. 387—how it is produced, iv. 388—its hallowed influences, iv. 389—is estimated above miraculous gifts, iv. 390; almsgiving, iv. 392; and knowledge, iv. 392—Paul's vivid description of, vi. 271—is a duty we owe to our neighbour, xii. 103, *et seq.*
- Charnock, Stephen, B.D.*, on the immutability of God, x. 43
- Charon*, of the poets, origin of the, viii. 184
- Cheerfulness*, the law of, in the exercise of charity, ii. 348
- Cherubim*, over the ark, what they taught, ii. 472—the altered position of, as connected with the gate of paradise and the tabernacle, iii. 71—guarding the gates of the primitive paradise, what implied by, iii. 355; vi. 41—Scripture views of the, iv. 176—being over the ark, emblematical of the angelic powers, iv. 177—are deeply interested in the covenant of redemption, iv. 177—as beheld in Ezekiel's vision, considered, iv. 258—the symbolical character of the, vi. 46, 84
- Children*, seeds of vice early sown in the hearts of, ii. 60—why the figure of a child was frequently used in the discourses of our Lord, ii. 61—the value of the early moral culture of, ii. 356—actual condition of, under the Gospel dispensation, iii. 78—how they enter into the covenant, iii. 79—celebrated the praises of Christ in the temple, considered, iii. 174—of what this event was typical, iii. 175—the phrase “out of the mouth of babes and sucklings,” &c., explained, iii. 175—are to be taught by parents the word of God, iv. 511—our Saviour's great regard for, vi. 204—duties of, to parents, xii. 135, *et seq.*—their conduct towards parents specified, xii. 140—corporeal correction seldom necessary, xii. 143. See *Infants, Infant baptism*
- Children's fund*, the object and importance of the, viii. 343
- Children of God*, glorious liberty of the, stated, iii. 135—the privilege of, only witnessed by the Holy Spirit, iv. 293
- Chili*, establishment of schools on the British system in, viii. 220
- Chinese*, tradition among the, concerning creation, vi. 49—sacrifice offered among the, ix. 51—and infanticide practised, ix. 77; xii. 315—deceit, a character of the, ix. 80; xii. 316—astronomical observations of the, ix. 339
- Cholera*, appearance of, in England, i. 542—awfully prevalent in Liverpool during the Conference of 1832, i. 563
- Choosing*, an act of grace, mean-

- ing of the term, xi. 345—  
 “chosen of God,” import of  
 the phrase, xi. 384. See *Elec-  
 tion*.
- Chorepiscopi*, an office in the pri-  
 mitive church, described, xii.  
 186
- Christ*, the mode of teaching  
 which he generally followed,  
 ii. 41, 60—the interest which  
 he took in children, noticed,  
 ii. 42—why he did not spe-  
 cially enjoin the instruction of  
 youth, ii. 43—great impor-  
 tance of the propitiatory death  
 of, ii. 75—character of the  
 miracles which he performed,  
 ii. 223—those miracles which  
 display his divinity, ii. 226—  
 his majesty, ii. 227—and his  
 compassion, ii. 228—nature of  
 that faith which Christ taught,  
 ii. 231—death of, of what typi-  
 cal, ii. 234—term Christ, de-  
 notes his official designation,  
 ii. 236—how the Son of God  
 became Christ, ii. 236—Christ  
 is opposed to ignorance, ii. 240  
 —his office of Mediator, con-  
 sidered, ii. 259—works of cre-  
 ation ascribed to, ii. 284—why  
 the earth was made for Christ,  
 ii. 286—the visible universe, ii.  
 288; things invisible, ii. 291;  
 and man were made for him,  
 ii. 293—in what respect he is  
 mighty to save, ii. 295—all  
 agencies given to the Son, ii.  
 297—his inauguration to the  
 regal dignity, ii. 304—charac-  
 ter of, as teacher sent from  
 God, ii. 321—his character of  
 Saviour and Lord, considered,  
 ii. 382—in what respects he is  
 the first fruits, ii. 389—his  
 glorified body described, ii.  
 391—this body was beheld at  
 the transfiguration, the con-  
 version of Saul, and in Pat-  
 mos, ii. 391, 392—death of, a  
 sacrifice, ii. 407—is apprehend-  
 ed by faith, ii. 407—was seen  
 in his glory by Stephen, ii.  
 423–425—was not the most  
 unsuccessful of preachers, ii.  
 436; iii. 265; iv. 1—is to be  
 worshipped, ii. 439—duty of  
 imitating him, ii. 440—end of  
 the mediatorial kingdom of, iii.  
 25—is acquainted with the  
 works of his church, iii. 67  
 —was a substitution for the  
 tree of life, iii. 70—his special  
 appointment to his work, iii. 87  
 —the manner of his induction  
 contrasted with other Prophets,  
 iii. 87, 88—predictions con-  
 cerning, confirmed by the  
 transfiguration, iii. 90—second  
 advent of, noticed, iii. 92—in-  
 nocency of Christ, as a victim  
 for sin, iii. 115, 394—value  
 of his hypostatic union, iii. 116,  
 117—in his person and work  
 is called “the Branch,” iii.  
 124—special work to which  
 he was appointed, described,  
 iii. 128—when the heart is  
 right with, iii. 151—object of  
 his coming into the world, iii.  
 164—his character given by  
 Zechariah, illustrated, iii. 165,  
*et seq.*—his work in the heart  
 as King, noticed, iii. 166—his  
 conduct to the church, iii. 167  
 —in what respects he has sal-  
 vation, iii. 168—how situated  
 when he entered on his mi-  
 nistry, iii. 189—his installa-  
 tion into his kingdom, iii. 192—  
 establishment of his kingdom  
 considered, iii. 192–200—to be  
 a subject of prayer and exer-  
 tion, iii. 200–206—names of,  
 why given, iii. 240—how he  
 differed from other men, iii.  
 247—his yoke described, iii.  
 254, *et seq.*—no rest to those  
 who reject the yoke of, iii. 256  
 —his intimate connexion with  
 the church, iii. 282—in what  
 respects he was sealed by the  
 Father, iii. 307, *et seq.*—how  
 he is the food of the soul, iii.  
 313—revelation of, vouch-  
 safed to man, what, iii. 332—  
 why termed a “fountain open-  
 ed,” iii. 375—result of the death  
 of, described by Daniel, iii. 386,  
*et seq.*—his entrance on his



threefold office, noticed, iii. 393—why he was termed “the Seed of the Woman,” iii. 393—his priestly office attested when on the cross, iii. 397—how he obtains for us a victory over death and the grave, iii. 432—why called “the Seed of Abraham,” iii. 488—true nature of the person of, iv. 33—blessing his disciples at Bethany, iv. 79—annunciation of, coming to judgment, iv. 79, 80—ascension of, considered, iv. 77–88—in what respects life is said to be in Christ, iv. 90, *et seq.*—his coming to judge the world, iv. 101–103—circumstances connected with the event, iv. 104, *et seq.*—his glory on the cross, iv. 111—in what respects the gift of Christ is unspeakable, iv. 121–127—how the glory of God is discovered in the face of, iv. 131, *et seq.*—character of, as a teacher, iv. 188—the divine government placed in his hands, iv. 246—his advent described, iv. 310—in what respects he is the image of God, iv. 311—real pomp of his first advent, iv. 313—our representative, iv. 324—our forerunner, iv. 328—reasons of love to, stated, iv. 450–453—the love of, illustrated, iv. 532–538—his care for his people, described, iv. 535—the necessity of his sufferings, vi. 41, *et seq.*—why the accounts of the life of, are termed “Gospels,” vi. 170—other histories of Christ, noticed, vi. 170—why he wrought more miracles than the Prophets, vi. 177—his works were real miracles, vi. 178—were peculiar to himself, vi. 178—all correctly reported, vi. 178—were varied and beneficent, vi. 179—character of his parabolic discourses, vi. 182—his didactic discourses considered, vi. 183, *et seq.*—are both doc-

trinal and practical, vi. 186—practical truths taught by his temptation, vi. 187—drives the traders from the temple, vi. 188—his healing on the Sabbath-day, a moral action, vi. 188—end designed by his transfiguration, vi. 198—his superiority over Moses, vi. 198—his method of teaching, vi. 201—asserts his pre-existence to Abraham, vi. 203—his benevolence toward Jerusalem, vi. 205—his elevated style in denouncing judgment on the Jews, vi. 207—why put to death at the Passover, vi. 210—why conveyed by the Jews to Pilate, vi. 212—time of his crucifixion, vi. 213—digest of the history of, vi. 219, *et seq.*—predicts the overthrow of Jerusalem, vi. 207, 235—his silence during the interrogatories of Herod, vi. 237—why his legs not broken, and his side pierced, vi. 238—his priesthood compared with that of Melchizedek, vi. 310—compared to a two-edged sword, vi. 314—nature of the crime for which he was arraigned before the Jewish and Roman tribunals, vii. 24, *et seq.*—observations on his descent into hell, vii. 437; viii. 286–319—his mediatorial reign declared, viii. 400—why called “the King’s son,” viii. 401—his office of sacrifice and intercessor, viii. 432—his regal office defined, viii. 528—authenticity of the history of, essential to the truth of revelation, ix. 148—predictions concerning, considered, ix. 261, *et seq.*—the doctrine of the pre-existence of, considered, x. 149, *et seq.*—the Jehovah of the Old Testament, x. 162, *et seq.*—objections to the doctrine considered, x. 164, *et seq.*—called, “the Angel of Jehovah,” x. 173—the “Messenger of the Covenant,” x. 174—“the

- Lord of the Temple," x. 175, *et seq.*—objections to the doctrine, answered, x. 186—his title "Jehovah," considered, x. 190—also of "Lord," x. 194, *et seq.*—of "God," x. 196, *et seq.*—other titles of, considered, x. 202, *et seq.*—in what sense superior to angels, x. 248, *et seq.*—attributes of, considered, x. 288, *et seq.*—acts of, a proof of divinity, x. 303, *et seq.*—divine worship paid to, x. 315, *et seq.*—humanity of Christ, x. 343—hypostatic union of the two natures, x. 345, *et seq.*—on the application of the divine nature to circumstances which pertain to the human nature of Christ, x. 349—confirms the Mosaic account of the fall, x. 406—propitiatory character of his death, xi. 23, *et seq.*—in the character of "substitute," xi. 84—why called "the Lamb of God," xi. 88—in what sense he was made sin for us, xi. 107
- Christ*, divinity of, an important doctrine of the Bible, i. 414—specially proved by many miracles of Christ, ii. 226—Paul's full conviction of, ii. 271—proof of, why not specially attempted by Apostles, ii. 284—the glory of, beheld by Apostles during his humiliation, ii. 436—proved by numerous works of power, ii. 437—peculiar value of the hypostatical union, noticed, iii. 117—illustrative of the righteousness of Christ, iii. 165—value and efficacy of the doctrine, iv. 89—historic proof of, viii. 61—Christ the Jehovah of the Old Testament, x. 162, *et seq.*—nature of the appearance of Christ under that character, x. 162, *et seq.*—objections to this doctrine considered, x. 164, *et seq.*—proved from the titles of Christ, x. 199, *et seq.*—of Jehovah, x. 190, *et seq.*—of Lord, x. 194, *et seq.*—of God, x. 196, *et seq.*—the Word of God, x. 204—the confession of Thomas, x. 207—on the application of the term "Spirit of Holiness" to the Son of God, x. 247, *et seq.*—divinity of the term "Logos," x. 286
- Christian devotedness*, founded on the principles of justice, iii. 12—and of benevolence, iii. 13—the great excellency of, iii. 227
- Christian dispensation*, benefits of contemplating the, iii. 105—essentially different from the Jewish, iv. 162—a comment upon the Jewish, iv. 277—the antitype of the Jewish, vi. 307—the two dispensations contrasted, vi. 314
- Christian Guardian*, his "Review of Mark Robinson's Observations," &c., reviewed, vii. 129, *et seq.*—character of this periodical, vii. 133—manner in which the review of the "Observations" was furnished, vii. 134—disgraceful character of the review, vii. 135—his eagerness to write on Methodism, vii. 136—affected sympathy with the members of the Methodist society, vii. 137, *et seq.*—sagely advises the breaking up of the Methodist system, vii. 138—charges the system with sectarianism, vii. 138, 139—complains of their administering the sacraments, vii. 138, 139—his ignorance of what primitive Methodism was, vii. 148—fatal results of the scheme he suggests, vii. 149—bitterly laments the *great power* of the Conference, vii. 150, *et seq.*—his consummate ignorance of the general affairs of Methodism, exposed, vii. 153, *et seq.*—his acknowledged inability to defend his proceedings, vii. 163, *et seq.*—slander of, regarding the literature of the Methodists, exhibited, vii. 165—and of the Methodist class

and prayer meetings, vii. 166  
—his ignorant idea of Moore's  
Life of Mr. Wesley, vii. 167  
—charges the Methodists with  
departing from the doctrines  
of their founder, vii. 167—his  
lamentable want of acquaint-  
ance with the Dissenting con-  
troversy, vii. 168—his slan-  
derous and uncandid conduct  
degrading to his religious char-  
acter, vii. 170-172

*Christian ministry*, the character  
and responsibility of, stated,  
i. 53, 256—remarks on a divine  
call to, 96—qualifications for  
the, i. 127. 257-259; ii. 160,  
*et seq.*—awful state of an un-  
faithful Preacher, i. 251; iii. 14  
—Saint Paul, the great model  
of a Christian Minister, i. 252  
—important counsels to, i. 275  
-279—extensive obligations of  
a Minister of Christ, ii. 12—on  
the qualification of courage, ii.  
160—a Minister must bear re-  
proach, ii. 161, 162—causes  
from whence this may arise,  
ii. 163-165—dangers of the  
ministerial character and office,  
ii. 165-168—on the qualifica-  
tion of love, ii. 168, *et seq.*—its  
importance, ii. 169; and na-  
ture, ii. 172-176—on the value  
of sobriety in a Christian Mi-  
nister, ii. 177, *et seq.*—how it  
is to be attained, ii. 177; and  
manifested, ii. 179, *et seq.*—  
moral duties to be inculcated,  
ii. 188—the application of  
Christian truth to be studied,  
ii. 191—every Minister has his  
own particular gift, ii. 190—  
various modes of preaching  
noticed, ii. 190-194—practical  
part of the Christian minis-  
try described, ii. 194-196—  
why a Preacher may not be  
ashamed of the Gospel of  
Christ, ii. 275—awful respon-  
sibility of, ii. 411—diversity  
of talent employed in, ii.  
447—importance of personal  
piety, ii. 447, 474—the di-  
vinely appointed means of re-

medying the evils of idolatry,  
ii. 492—is founded on the  
principles of Christian devo-  
tedness, iii. 14—the end of,  
stated, iii. 95—is intended to  
apply and enforce the truth,  
iii. 98—great advantages of,  
noticed, iii. 99—is to admin-  
ister the ordinances and dis-  
cipline of the church, iii. 100  
—a means of salvation, iii.  
170—an important gift of the  
Holy Spirit, iv. 83—is em-  
phatically the ministry of men,  
iv. 159—it is authorized, iv.  
160—open and undisguised,  
iv. 161—zealous and success-  
ful, iv. 161—important objects  
contemplated, iv. 166—views  
entertained of a call to the, by  
the early Methodist Conference,  
v. 187—orders of Ministers al-  
luded to, vi. 284—important du-  
ties of the, vii. 93—these duties  
are inherent, vii. 93, *et seq.*—  
every Minister has a right  
to claim these principles, vii.  
94—and for which he is re-  
sponsible to God, vii. 95—pe-  
culiar excellency of the Me-  
thodist ministry, vii. 95, 96—  
its scriptural authority to rule  
the church, vii. 96; xii. 187, *et  
seq.*—duties and powers of, not  
divided with Leaders' Meet-  
ing, vii. 97—inherent powers  
of, maintained by the Method-  
ist Conference, vii. 98—ineffi-  
ciency of learning, separate  
from piety, in a Minister, vii.  
184—a philosophical preach-  
ing of the Gospel condemned,  
vii. 261—the institution of, a  
result of the atonement of  
Christ, xi. 170—does not ori-  
ginate with the people, xii.  
191—but with those who are  
in that office, xii. 191—the  
part which the people took in  
the ordination of Christian  
Ministers in the primitive  
church, xii. 192—to whom the  
trial of unworthy Ministers  
should be entrusted, xii. 197

*Christian Observer*, answer of

the, on Butler's contrast between Socrates and Christ, x. 8

*ristian philosophy*, defined, vii. 374—Mahometanism accounted for on the principles of, vii. 375

*ristianity* never so inefficient as when it is neglected, i. 150—makes ample provision for the religious instruction of youth, ii. 43—in what respect it is a revelation from God, ii. 88—its aggressive character exemplified, ii. 100—effects of, manifested on the negro race, ii. 102–104—suffers from pagan philosophy, ii. 198—is to become the religion of the world, ii. 217—in what respects it is a rational religion, ii. 217—the foundation of, ii. 235—Paganism contrasted with Christianity, ii. 251, 328—general effects of scriptural Christianity, ii. 275—did not silently steal into the world, ii. 317—erroneous views of, entertained by the Corinthians, ii. 319—it is the wisdom of God, ii. 319—affords all requisite instruction, ii. 320—is a divine contrivance to pardon the guilty, ii. 321—it promotes universal happiness, ii. 323—the expansive benevolence of, ii. 325—is the wisdom of God in a mystery, ii. 326—the points of resemblance between the mysteries of Christianity and of Paganism, ii. 326—scheme of, laid before the foundation of the world, ii. 331—presented a standard of high moral attainment, ii. 371—how it teaches the immortality of the soul, ii. 428—its triumphs over error and persecution, ii. 442—over principles which oppressed society, ii. 443—over selfishness, ii. 444—it provides for the poor, and protects the slave, ii. 445—its triumphs over ignorance, ii. 445; and vice, ii. 445; and death, ii. 446—its noble and

benevolent character, noticed, iii. 1—truth of, illustrated in the conversion of St. Paul, iii. 38—appeals powerfully to experience, iii. 48—the positive institutions of, iii. 60—as manifested to the glorified saint, iii. 108—progress of, compared to a “branch,” iii. 125—why it is compared to a “yoke,” iii. 254—why said to be easy, iii. 256—its conformity with the truth and reality of things, iii. 256—possesses the approbation of God, iii. 257—how calculated to bless the earth, iii. 492—is divinely revealed truth, iii. 492—produces human happiness, iii. 493—is connected with the promise of the Holy Spirit, iii. 495—inculcates all relative duties, iii. 496–498—the expansive character of, iv. 163—is the religion of the poor, iv. 235—how it is constituted the religion of mankind, iv. 281—the sacrificial character of, defended, iv. 282—imperfect character of, independent of the priesthood of Christ, iv. 284—general character of, iv. 395, 396—is not inferior to what it was in former days, iv. 414—not opposed to scientific knowledge, iv. 460—external and practical character of, vi. 358—great influence which it ought to have in commercial affairs, vii. 227—perfection of the Christian system, vii. 228—moral efficacy of, vii. 264—awful proof of the neglect of, vii. 266—evils arising from its non-application, vii. 268—importance of a knowledge of the influence of, vii. 270—present state of, in India, among Catholic converts, vii. 317—present state of, in Jerusalem, vii. 348—paralleled with Mahometanism, vii. 361, *et seq.*—wildness of that contrast, vii. 363—how defended against those who compare it with

Mahometanism, vii. 364—state of the world at its establishment, noticed, vii. 368—cannot legitimately be paralleled with Islamism, vii. 372—how fearfully corrupted, viii. 3—moral tendency of, viii. 4—reason why it has not fully renovated the condition of men, traced to the true source, viii. 8, *et seq.*—want of success no proof of the failure of the system, viii. 8, *et seq.*—introduction of, into Russia, viii. 207—provisions of, work for the benefit of God's people, viii. 456—high morality of, stated, ix. 313, *et seq.*—on the early progress of, ix. 319, *et seq.*; xii. 358—effect of, on society at large, ix. 322; xii. 360—the term defined, xii. 303

*Christians*, how far the great body of, shall be instrumental in the conversion of the world, ii. 13—duty of, to promote the cause of universal peace, ii. 39—how the Christian believes in Christ, ii. 286—his condition that of a stranger or pilgrim, ii. 344—when made a citizen of heaven, ii. 373—spiritual freedom of, ii. 374; iii. 284—and honourable employment, ii. 375—is a priest in the temple of God, ii. 376—the fellowship he enjoys, ii. 376—is entitled to the property of the saints, ii. 377—the common character of, ii. 378—grounds of the courage of the, ii. 380—special objects of the pursuit of, ii. 384—is required to regard the end of his being, iii. 2—he lives not to himself, iii. 3—difference between him and the man who lives to himself, iii. 4—his interest in the cause of Christ, stated, iii. 4—is actively benevolent towards his fellow-men, iii. 6—in what respect he is a steward of his Lord's goods, iii. 7—how he dieth not to himself, iii. 7—is the Lord's, and how, iii. 10—his duty in regard to the

church, noticed, iii. 20, 151—his comprehensive knowledge, iii. 51—the true glory of a Christian stated, iii. 57—experience of, described, iii. 104—his glorious liberty, iii. 135—in what respect said to be an heir, iii. 160—why termed “a prisoner of hope,” iii. 179—conduct of, in the establishment of the kingdom of Christ, iii. 203—how the Lord of all is the Lord of the Christian, iii. 211—duty of, in regard to the worship of God, iii. 215—how to imitate the saints of old, iii. 228—difficulties against which he has to strive, iii. 268—affections of, to be fixed on the heavenly Jerusalem, iii. 283—in what sense he partakes of the divine nature, iii. 291—experience of, illustrates the stability of divine counsels, iii. 305—advantages of, superior to the Jews, iii. 319—not to go out of the world, in order to be “unspotted,” iii. 372—unreasonableness of doubting, iii. 424—how his victory over death and the grave is achieved, iii. 432—duty of, as pilgrims, iii. 444—his encouragements to Missionary exertion, considered, iii. 433–486—why called “the first-born,” iv. 424—the militant character of, iv. 432—why Christians had all things in common, vi. 243—when the disciples were first called “Christians,” vi. 246—enemies of, described, vi. 286—why afflicted and oppressed, x. 102—the election of, as members of the church, considered, xi. 310, *et seq.*

*Chronology of the creation*, according to Moses, defended, ix. 339; xii. 367

*Chronometer*, an example of a natural one, ix. 341

*Chrysostom*, quoted, on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 207—on the import

- of the word *προσκαρτερουντες*, xii. 54
- Hubb*, Thomas, a sceptical remark of, on the supremacy of the tribe of Judah, ix. 253
- Church of Christ*, character of the association constituting a church, ii. 13; xii. 166—prosperity of, a proof of the good-will of God to man, ii. 216—evidence of the presence of God with, ii. 218—the church, and her ordinances, were instituted for the Son, ii. 299—beauty of holiness in the, ii. 315—is a house for the name of God, ii. 336—is the place of authorized and accepted sacrifice, ii. 337—of united worship and blessing, ii. 337—of actual communion between God and man, ii. 338—humbling considerations connected with our assisting in the erection of a church, ii. 340—meaning of the term, iii. 20—man's duty in regard to, iii. 20—conversion of Saul an act of grace to the, iii. 41—works of the, known to Christ, iii. 67—importance of its institution, iii. 100—was termed "Zion" by the ancient Prophets, iii. 164—Christ's conduct to, illustrative of his righteousness, iii. 167—is an instrument of salvation, iii. 170—advantages of union with, iii. 184—how it was situated when Christ entered upon his ministry, iii. 189—the Lord of the church is the Lord of all, iii. 210—is not to despair in the establishment of the kingdom of Christ, iii. 205—in what respects it is compared to Mount Zion, iii. 275—is distinguished by her zeal, iii. 276—why compared to "Jerusalem," iii. 282—her divine appointment, iii. 282—why termed "the mother of us all," iii. 284—her foundations considered, iii. 286—how built on the twelve Apostles, iii. 287—the call of, to convert the Heathen, considered, iii. 462—the duty of co-operating in Missionary enterprises, iii. 468—how the church may thus co-operate, iii. 469—encouragement so to do, iii. 483—486—neglected her day of visitation, iv. 9—her security and perpetuity, iv. 40—her tranquillity, iv. 41—the supplies of, noticed, iv. 42—the gladness of, iv. 43—mystery of the history of, iv. 231—an apocalyptic representation of, noticed, iv. 231—blessings granted to the church demand gratitude, iv. 527—when the church of God was first established, vi. 52—often compared to the human body, vi. 281—the election of, considered, xi. 309, *et seq.*—import of the term, xii. 166—the obligation and end of church-fellowship stated, xii. 166—the discipline of, noticed, xii. 168—composition of the primitive church stated, xii. 169—opinions respecting the visible unity of, xii. 184, *et seq.*—the scriptural view of this unity given, xii. 185—the original independency of the Christian churches, xii. 185—beneficial effects attending their union, xii. 185—character of the independence of the early churches, xii. 186—duties of the members toward their Pastors, xii. 187, *et seq.*—admission of members into, to whom entrusted, xii. 196—on the authority of, in subjects of controversy, xii. 201, *et seq.*—the end for which government is administered, xii. 199, *et seq.*—infants declared to be members of the, xii. 251. See *Christian ministry*.
- Church of England*, how far the doctrines of Methodism differ from those of, v. 80—irregularity of Mr. Wesley concerning, v. 96—the Rev. Charles Wesley's attachment to, considered, v. 198—principles which led the Rev. John Wesley to adhere

to, v. 198, 199—cause of misunderstanding between the two Wesleys, v. 199, 200—question of separation from, considered, v. 212—is not the exclusive instructress of the people, v. 334—the real cause of the Methodists separating from, v. 334, 459—controversy among the Methodists respecting receiving the sacrament at the church, alluded to, v. 335—reasons why the Methodists cannot rejoin the Church, v. 336—the great benefit resulting to the Church and nation through Methodism, v. 336–342, 464, *et seq.*—whom Methodism is said to have alienated from the, v. 342, 472—testimony of Divines of the, in favour of the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, v. 400–405—state of religion in, when Mr. Wesley's public life commenced, v. 450–452; vii. 412—tendency of Mr. Wesley's proceedings to promote separation from, considered, v. 456—powerful reasons why Mr. Wesley was anxious not to form a sect, v. 462 (n.)—the great body of the Methodists not of the Establishment, vii. 142—high notions of the, on ordination, vii. 145—the Church of England is equally opposed to primitive as to modern Methodism, vii. 147, *et seq.*—reason why it is so freed from the German rationalism, vii. 183—inefficient application of its moral energies, vii. 169, 170—Mr. Wesley's alleged inconsistency with the, considered, vii. 423, *et seq.*—is the best of Church establishments, viii. 124—great fault of the defences of, viii. 125—moral influence of, on the nation, viii. 125—is not able to prevent separation from herself, viii. 127—the true ground of the defence of, viii. 131—on the hypostatical union, x. 344—on the doctrine of original

sin, x. 439—on the General Councils of the Church, xii. 201—on the authority of the, on subjects of controversy, xii. 200, 201—on sacraments, xii. 219—on baptismal regeneration, xii. 223—her views respecting the eucharist, noticed, xii. 295

*Church establishments*, on the lawfulness of, viii. 123—the Church of England the best of, viii. 124

— *government*, general principles of, laid down, i. 483; vi. 285—comparative value of the three forms of, v. 144—origin of, stated, v. 144; xii. 167—its nature, xii. 167, *et seq.*—how discipline should be administered, xii. 168—true excommunication is what, xii. 169—to whom the government of the church is committed, xii. 169, *et seq.*—constitution of the primitive church formed upon the model of the Jewish synagogues, xii. 174—why from the synagogue rather than from the temple, xii. 176—formation of dioceses and parishes, referred to, xii. 176—on the establishment of Christianity the government of the church was modelled after the government of the Roman empire, xii. 177—the share which the people should have in their own government, considered, xii. 187, *et seq.*—influence of the state when churches, are connected with it, xii. 187, *et seq.*—character of the government of churches, communion with which is voluntary, xii. 189—in all ecclesiastical government the laws of Christ must be recognised, xii. 190—solemn obligation of the laws of the church, xii. 192, *et seq.*—disciplinary regulations, how should be adopted, xii. 195—evils attending popular and indiscriminate legislation in the church, xii. 196—the ends for

which church government is exercised, xii. 199, *et seq.*—the preservation of sound doctrine, xii. 199, *et seq.*—the establishment of suitable regulations for the conduct of all in the church, xii. 202, *et seq.*—and the edification of its members, xii. 204—the infliction and removal of censure, xii. 205—moral influence resulting from a due attention to discipline, xii. 209—the rigid administration of, in the primitive church, described, xii. 210—principles to be recognised in all forms of church-government, xii. 211. See *Discipline*.

*icero*, quoted, on the punishment of crucifixion, iv. 111—his doubts respecting the immortality of the soul, ix. 15, 72; xii. 313—on the unauthorized nature of mere human opinion, ix. 22—on the uncertainty of human reason, ix. 30—on the origin of law ix. 34—on the necessity of divine instruction, ix. 61—denied the foreknowledge of God, ix. 64—condemned gladiatorial combats, ix. 76—his description of a good man, ix. 78; xii. 315—on the use of reason, ix. 134—on the omniscience of the Deity, x. 6—alludes to the original state and fall of man, x. 414—on the tendency of man to evil, x. 464—on the unlawfulness of suicide, xii. 115

*ircuits*, Methodist, an early list of, v. 195

*ircumcision*, spiritual benefits of, vii. 378—imperfect view of this rite, by Maimonides, vii. 523—the sign and seal of the Abrahamic covenant, xii. 225—why the rite was re-enacted under the law of Moses, xii. 226—controversy respecting, in the apostolic churches, noticed, xii. 227—spiritual import of the rite, xii. 227—necessity of its abrogation, xii.

227, 231—views of St. Paul concerning this rite, explained, xii. 228—why practised among the early Christian Jews, xii. 229—of what circumcision was a sign, xii. 239; and a seal, xii. 241—a religious and not merely a political rite, xii. 251. See *Baptism*, *Abrahamic covenant*

*Cities of refuge* found in the Sandwich Islands, viii. 107

*Citizens*, Christian, nature of, ii. 372—when a man is constituted a citizen of heaven, ii. 373—privileges of, ii. 374—the bold and courageous character of, ii. 380—their general spirit, ii. 381—where the affections of, are placed, ii. 381

*City*, that to which Christians belong, ii. 372—privileges of the heavenly, ii. 374

*City-road chapel*, London, erection of the, v. 247—arrangement of the services therein, v. 248—inscription on the tablet erected to the memory of Mr. Wesley, noticed, v. 315

*Civilization*, how far connected with Christianity in the evangelization of the world, ii. 10—is ever imperfect without religion, ix. 374

*Clarendon*, Lord, on the duty of the state in reference to religion, viii. 123

*Clarke*, Dr. Adam, sentiments of, respecting the eternal Sonship of Christ, noticed, i. 228–242; vii. 3–5—character of, i. 238—comparisons between Dr. Clarke and Mr. Watson invidious and absurd, i. 238—instructs two Priests of Budhu in the principles of the Christian religion, i. 244—anecdote of, i. 296—great alarm of, on the appearance of the Asiatic cholera in England, i. 568—his death, i. 579—is instrumental in the conversion of Mr. Butterworth, ii. 136—his “Memoirs of the Wesley Family,” noticed, v. 1—confusion



- in his note on John i. 14, pointed out, vii. 8—his assertion that the doctrine of the eternal Sonship is not in the Scriptures, refuted, vii. 13—erroneous reasoning of, on that doctrine, exhibited, vii. 40, *et seq.*—comment of, on Luke i. 35, examined, vii. 44—the fallacy of his principle, laid down in the interpretation of Scripture, exposed, vii. 45, *et seq.*—his dangerous use of human reason in matters of pure revelation, vii. 47—his position, that “the doctrines of Scripture are doctrines of eternal reason,” examined, vii. 49, *et seq.*—the existence of faith in the Christian, proved to be incompatible with his principles, vii. 57, *et seq.*—position of, that no man should believe doctrines which contradict reason, refuted, vii. 62, *et seq.*—fearful tendency of his own principles, vii. 76, *et seq.*—his “Sermon on the rights of God and Cæsar,” reviewed, vii. 511–515—its excellency, vii. 513—on the enchantments of the magicians, ix. 216—on the scripture character of God, ix. 284; viii. 373–377—on the creation of the world, ix. 344—on the names of God, ix. 363, 364—his observations on the Greek article, referred to, x. 210—his obvious difficulty, in disposing of texts of Scripture, which are opposed to his theory, in regard to the Son of God, x. 234
- Clarke, Dr. Edward D., his account of the river Jordan, vi. 175—description of the plain of Esdraelon, vi. 176
- Dr. Samuel, his “Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God,” noticed, i. 379—his argument *a priori* in proof of the existence of a first cause, considered, i. 380; ix. 454—how he was led into Arianism, ix. 454—on the unauthorized character of human opinion, ix. 22—on the uncertainty of human reason, ix. 31—on the ground of moral obligation, ix. 93—his definition of the term “miracle,” ix. 101—on the evidence of prophecy, ix. 119—on the internal evidence of revelation, ix. 123—on the correspondence between type and anti-type, ix. 249—on the relation between cause and effect, ix. 384—his demonstration of the intelligence of God, ix. 394, *et seq.*—his unsatisfactory view of the necessary existence of the divine Being, ix. 457—on the divine unity, ix. 463—on the knowledge of contingent events, x. 17—on the moral liberty of God, x. 49—his remarks on the title of “God,” applied to Christ, examined, x. 197—on the Socinian interpretation of the title of Christ, “God blessed for ever,” x. 215—the hypothesis of, stated, x. 357
- Class-meetings, rudiments of, adopted by Mr. Wesley in Georgia, v. 36—origin of, in England, v. 101—defended against the slander of the Christian Guardian, vii. 166—Methodists exhorted to a due attendance on, viii. 367
- Claude, Bishop of Turin, his intrepid zeal in opposing the early corruptions of the Church of Rome, vii. 457—the character, and suppression of his writings, vii. 458—blessed effects of his fidelity, vii. 459
- Clean animals and unclean, distribution of, accounted for, xi. 117
- Cleanthes, the Stoic, his hymn to Jupiter, ix. 500
- Clement, of Alexandria, on hieroglyphical writing, viii. 161—and on Christ being the Jehovah of the Old Testament, x. 185
- of Rome, on the obligation of public worship, xii. 71

*erc*, *Le*, his character as an expositor, viii. 73

*ergy*, the, of the English Church, character of, at the rise of Methodism, v. 63—"Bristol Clergy," character of the, at that period, v. 75—cause of the ecclesiastical irregularity of the Wesleys, v. 97, 98—diabolical conduct of a Clergyman at Wednesbury, recorded, v. 111—state of the case between, and Mr. Wesley, v. 137—his desire for the union and co-operation of, frustrated, v. 140—Mr. Wesley's address to, v. 213—dispute at Bath on the appointment of a Clergyman to the Methodist chapel, v. 249—views entertained by, of the labours and objects of Mr. Wesley, v. 287—disdain and bigotry manifested by, toward Methodism, v. 333—not the exclusive instructors of the people, v. 334—the sole cause of the separation of the Methodists, v. 335—state of religion among, when Mr. Wesley's public life commenced, v. 451—but few of whom, were coadjutors of the Wesleys, v. 454—gratifying alteration in doctrines, &c., of, v. 459—habitual negligence of, to the wants of the West India negro, vi. 452, *et seq.*—order of, a proof of the truth of Gospel history, ix. 162

*ergy of Orel*, laudable zeal of, in the circulation of the Scriptures, viii. 200

*ericus*, first reply to, on the "witness of the Spirit," viii. 258—268—his duty to prove why he dissents from the doctrines of his own Church, viii. 260—his question respecting the abuse of the doctrine, considered, viii. 262, *et seq.*—asks for a passage of Scripture, requiring the assurance of forgiveness, viii. 265, *et seq.*—second reply to, viii. 272—285—on inferential testimony, viii.

277—his near approach to the standard of evangelical truth, viii. 279, *et seq.*—fallacy of the scheme of, viii. 282

*Clinic baptism*, defined, xii. 270

"*Clothed with salvation*," meaning of the phrase, ii. 474

*Clouds*, the philosophy of, ii. 360—the figurative use of the term, ii. 360

*Coke*, Dr. Thomas, his character as a Missionary, i. 135; v. 266; vii. 332—his departure from England to India, i. 136—his death at sea, i. 175—his efforts to convert the Heathen, iii. 463—is appointed a Superintendent over the American societies, v. 263—his first connexion with Mr. Wesley, alluded to, v. 267—his introduction of Missionaries into the West Indies, vi. 464—testimony of, to the loyalty of the religious negroes, vi. 500—remarks on his biography of Mr. Wesley, vii. 408—Mr. Moore's *chary* account of, vii. 432

*Collateral evidence*, defined, ix. 319; xii. 358

*Collins*, Anthony, the infidel, his moral character, ix. 312

*Colossians*, who they were, vi. 293—leading topics of Paul's epistle to the, vi. 293—danger to which the church of, was exposed, vi. 293, 294

*Colquhoun*, Patrick, LL.D., on the number of slaves in the British colonies, vi. 424

*Come to*, as applied to Christ, viii. 57

*Comfort*, religious, unknown in the systems of Paganism, ii. 483

*Comforter*, a special office of the Spirit, iii. 383

"*Coming down from heaven*," the Socinian interpretation of this phrase, examined, x. 154

*Coming of Christ*, meaning of the phrase, iv. 101—the delay in his advent, noticed, iv. 102—why said to take place at midnight, iv. 102, 103—pomp and

- glory of his approach, iv. 103  
—nature of the “cry” which shall attend his coming, iv. 104—illustrated by Paul, in his epistle to the Thessalonians, vi. 299—mistakes concerning the, corrected, vi. 300
- Commerce*, success of, advantageous to the progress of the Gospel, ii. 311—Chalmers’s Discourses on the application of Christianity to, reviewed, vii. 227–237—the great influence which religion ought to have in the affairs of, vii. 227—a prevailing sentiment among commercial men, noticed, vii. 229
- Commiseration of sin*, a characteristic trait of good men, ii. 403—was eminently displayed in the Wesleys, ii. 404
- Common*, why Jewish Christians had all things in common, vi. 243
- Communion*, advantage from union with the church, described, iii. 185—with God, lost by the fall, iii. 353—enjoyed only by the pure and holy, vi. 342—heavenly communion, in what it consists, vi. 343—with God, enjoined, viii. 396
- Commutative justice*, defined, x. 99; xi. 6
- Comparisons*, nature of those employed by Christ, vi. 204
- Compassion*, displayed by the miracles of Christ, ii. 228—a characteristic trait of his kingdom, viii. 404
- *of God*, impugned by the doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation, xi. 350
- Compensation*, the term how far proper, applied to the death of Christ, xi. 74—the Antinomian perversion of the term, refuted, xi. 75
- Concessions*, of the Methodist Conference, in 1797, character of the, vii. 97
- Condescension of God*, displayed in his regard for the human race, iv. 235—to the lower ranks of society, iv. 235—to man in trouble, iv. 236—and to the honour done to human nature, iv. 237—ought always to be remembered, viii. 383
- Conditions* of man’s reconciliation with God, xi. 50—wisdom and importance of a conditional pardon, xi. 58—Antinomian views of the atonement inconsistent with the idea of conditions, xi. 79
- Coneybeare*, J. J., M.A., his “Attempt to trace the History, &c., of the secondary and spiritual interpretation of Scripture,” reviewed, viii. 70–80—character and fate of the author, viii. 70—importance of his subject, viii. 71
- Conference of the Methodists*, account of the first, in London, v. 122—consultation of, on church government, v. 144—extract from the early Minutes of, v. 146–147—business of, in regard to Preachers, v. 156—doctrines to be taught, settled there, v. 157—extract from the Minutes of, respecting doctrine, v. 157, 158—Minutes of the, contain the frame-work of the discipline of Methodism, v. 185—miscellaneous regulations of, v. 187–189—manuscript copies of the early Minutes extant, v. 188 (n)—question of separation from the Church, considered at, v. 212—the Minutes of, which gave rise to the Calvinistic controversy, v. 226, 229—remarks upon them, v. 231—Mr. Shirley demands their recantation, v. 235—attends the Conference with that object, v. 236—the declaration of, v. 236—Shirley’s note appended to the declaration, v. 238—history of the interview, v. 237–239—Thomas Olivers’s opposition to the declaration, v. 238—order of proceeding in the business of,

- v. 259, 260—a passage in the Minutes of, defended from an erroneous construction of Mr. Southey, v. 473—power of, stated, vii. 96—concessions of, in 1797, noticed, vii. 97—guards against an undue exercise of power provided, vii. 97, 98—the common governing power of the body, vii. 98—excellency and necessity of such a court of appeal, vii. 99—how the checks against arbitrary conduct operate, vii. 102—its powers of interference, stated, vii. 105. *et seq.*—power of, contrasted with that of the national Clergy, vii. 151—its legislative power defended from the quibbling of Mark Robinson, vii. 152, *et seq.*—actual power of, stated and defended, vii. 156, *et seq.*—the question of lay-delegation considered, vii. 159—addresses of, to the Methodist societies, viii. 328–372—address of, to his majesty George IV. on his accession, viii. 345
- Confession of God*, a mark of the Christian, iii. 104
- Confessions of faith*, the origin and use of, xii. 200
- Confidence*, in God, increased by divine worship, iii. 146—in the intercession of Christ, a mark of a right state of the heart, iii. 152—possibility of, in our being *now* in a state of salvation, considered, iv. 296
- Confirmation*, a Popish sacrament, rests on no scriptural authority, xii. 214
- Conflagration*, a general, believed by the heathen philosophers, ix. 52
- Confucius*, a believer in the eternity of matter, ix. 64
- Conolly*, John, M. D., his “Introductory Lecture in the University of London,” reviewed, vii. 392–406—attempts to show that the “leading principle” of the institution will enable him to serve the cause of religion, vii. 401—his view of the benefit of religion, vii. 402.
- Conscience*, how easily perverted, seen in the case of Saul, ii. 426—“conscience of sins,” the phrase explained, iii. 118—term “conscience” defined, iii. 118—misery of, when wounded, iii. 119—how purified by the blood of Christ, iii. 119—an approving conscience, lost by the fall, iii. 352—God the only refuge from the guilt of, iii. 450—the gift of, vouchsafed through Christ, iv. 122—unspeakable value of, iv. 123—a public conscience defined, iv. 123—liberty of, one of the rights of man, xii. 123—how far a Christian government may interfere in the manner in which the rights of conscience are exercised, xii. 124
- Consciousness*, not the result of animal organization, ix. 741
- Consideration*, a mode of redeeming the time, iv. 199
- Constantinople*, Council of, when held, xii. 200—the heresy which it refuted, xii. 200
- Consubstantiation*, defined, xii. 291
- Contemplation*, a pleasure peculiar to man, ii. 68—of God, profitable and practicable, viii. 390
- Contingent*, meaning of the term, x. 14
- Contradictions*, supposed, in Scripture, alluded to, ix. 331
- Contributions* towards the cause of God, not meritorious, ii. 343
- Contrivance*, marks of, in the works of God, demonstrated, ix. 404, *et seq.*—illustrated by the solar system, ix. 409—by the human body, ix. 410, *et seq.*—by the vegetable world, ix. 418—by man’s mental faculties, ix. 419, *et seq.*—by the mechanism of a watch, ix. 422, *et seq.*—by the structure and use of the eye, ix. 430—by the

- double parts of the body, ix. 436—the configuration of its cavities, ix. 437; and the vertebral column, ix. 438—importance of the doctrine of, ix. 442—joined with power, ix. 443—on beneficial contrivance discovered in the works of God, x. 62
- Conversation*, efficacy of, in the spread of the Gospel, ii. 369—extensive signification of the term in Scripture, ii. 372—character of the, of the citizens of heaven, ii. 379—“Conversations for the Young,” vi. 5–331
- Conversion*, nature of, defined, ii. 135; vi. 349; vii. 197—fully implied in true religion, iii. 44—of the world, not effected without great perseverance, iv. 217—process of, described, iv. 316—of the Heathen, how to be produced, iv. 317—remarks on a scriptural conversion, v. 56—theological points included in the account given of Mr. Wesley’s conversion, v. 363—Southey’s flippant observations upon, v. 364—Southey’s remarks upon, censured, v. 412—Paley’s observations on, quoted, v. 413—process of, whether sudden or otherwise, defended, v. 413–418—the true rule of judging on these subjects, noticed, v. 418—President Edwards quoted on the effects of, v. 419—the act of forgiveness necessarily instantaneous and complete, v. 420—Paley quoted on the effect of conversion, v. 423—sudden conversions, not peculiar to Methodism, proved from Gillies’s “Historical Collections,” v. 515–532—is not a concomitant of repentance, vii. 197
- Conviction*, when wrought on the earth by the Most High, iii. 279—of sin, a work of the Spirit, iii. 382—of the fact of our being sinners necessary to repentance, iv. 313—and also of the danger and desert of sin, iv. 314—a conviction of sin, defined, xi. 230
- Cook*, Capt. James, his discovery of the Sandwich Islands, viii. 97—divine honours paid to him, viii. 112—cause of his death, viii. 113
- , Dr. George, his “Illustration of the Evidence of Christ’s Resurrection,” referred to, ix. 214.
- Copenhagen*, expedition against, defended, vi. 407
- Copleston*, Bishop, his estimate of the labours and success of the Rev. J. Wesley, v. 288—his “Inquiry into the Doctrines of Necessity and Predestination,” reviewed, vii. 291—his “Remarks upon the objections made to certain passages in the Inquiry,” noticed, vii. 291—on the knowledge of contingent events, x. 18—on the opinions held by Melancthon, xi. 417
- Corban*, meaning of the term, xi. 99
- Corinth*, church of, rich men were not the best members of the, ii. 317—objections of, to the preaching of St. Paul, noticed, ii. 317—its worldly wisdom condemned, ii. 319—first epistle to, when written, vi. 267—the party spirit of the church reproved, vi. 267—St. Paul defends his mode of preaching Christ there, vi. 267—danger of, from boasting and delusive teachers, vi. 268—the visit of Timothy there, vi. 268—was richly endowed with miraculous gifts, vi. 271—although they were much abused, vi. 271—Hellenistic Jews injurious to Paul at, vi. 273
- Cornwall*, character of Methodism in, v. 116—persecution there, v. 117—the Magistrates of, send John Nelson and Thomas Beard for soldiers, v.

- 117—Mr. Wesley's strict attention to discipline in that county, v. 152
- Coronation of Kings*, importance of the religious rites connected with the, vii. 508—pomp associated with, not objectionable, vii. 508
- Correction*, the connexion between moral correction and discipline, ii. 76
- Corruption*, the bondage of, explained, iii. 134—moral corruption, a mark of this bondage, iii. 134—universal influence of, iii. 135—of the sacred Scriptures, proved to be impossible, ix. 190, *et seq.*
- Cosmogony* of the Phenicians and Persians, ix. 47
- Councils*, General, of the early church, alluded to, xii. 200—respect shown to the decisions of the, xii. 200
- Counsels of God*, what, iii. 299—divine interposition respecting man, the result of, iii. 300—are supreme and uncontrollable, iii. 301—their stability illustrated, iii. 302
- Courage of the Apostles*, an extraordinary work of the Spirit, iii. 381
- Covenant*, renewal of the, among the Methodists, nature of the institution, v. 492—Southey's erroneous conceptions of, v. 492
- *of God*, a covenant of deliverance, iii. 178—an interest in, through union with the church, iii. 185—promises to Ishmael, not a covenant, vii. 376—scriptural view of the term, vii. 377—that in which David rejoiced, stated, viii. 497—various revelations of, alluded to, viii. 497, *et seq.*—in what sense it is everlasting, viii. 502—its comprehensive character, viii. 503—supported by sound evidence, viii. 504—is complete and universal, viii. 506—in what respects it is sure, viii. 507—the ground of David's hope, viii. 508; of his desire, viii. 509; and consolation, viii. 510. See *Circumcision*, *Abrahamic covenant*, *Baptism*.
- Covenant of works*, the phrase defined, x. 385
- Covetousness*, an awful instance of, in Judas, vi. 191
- Cowper*, William, Esq., his hymn on "Providence," criticised, v. 298
- Cranmer*, Archbishop, on the identity of the office of Bishop and Priest, xii. 184
- Creation*, purposes of God in the work of, noticed, ii. 255—works of, attributed to the Son of God, ii. 285; vi. 19—why performed for the Son, ii. 285—worlds inhabited or uninhabited made for the Son, ii. 288—work of, understood by the Christian, iii. 51—Lord of, is Lord of the church, iii. 210—meaning of the term, vi. 18; ix. 344—moral results of the doctrine of, vi. 19—work of, attributed to the Father, vi. 20—and to the Holy Spirit, vi. 20; x. 363—of the stars, vi. 21—conjectures respecting the purposes contemplated in the sidereal creation, vi. 22—an instance of the care of God, vi. 24—the time of creation, considered, vi. 26—the researches of geologists, noticed, vi. 26—difference in the account of the creation of man and that of other beings, vi. 27—traditions concerning, vi. 49—the Mosaic account of, corroborated, vi. 50—records of, preserved in ancient fabulous history, ix. 47—traditions concerning, in the Greek philosophy, noticed, ix. 47—Mosaic account of the chronology of, examined, ix. 339—objections to the Mosaic date of, considered, ix. 341, *et seq.*—the period of, ix. 343—Voltaire's objection to the Mosaic ac-

- count of, noticed, ix. 347—work of the fourth day, considered, ix. 350—an important act of God, ix. 365—vague conceptions of the Heathen respecting, ix. 377—a display of the wisdom of God, x. 50—great moral end of, x. 51—the Socinian view of creation being ascribed to Christ, x. 206—being attributed to the Son, proves the divinity of the title, x. 241, 303—feeble criticism of Socinians respecting, x. 303—attributed to the Trinity, x. 363—of man, considered, x. 386—final cause of the creation of man, considered, x. 398
- Credibility of Gospel history*, considered, ix. 164, *et seq.*—of the testimony of the sacred writers, ix. 195, *et seq.*—marks of a faithful and exact testimony, ix. 196
- Credulity*, remarks on the alleged credulity of Mr. Wesley, v. 345
- Creeds*, necessity and importance of these formularies, x. 345
- Crellius*, his sophistry on the impulsive cause of the death of Christ, xi. 33—his cavil on the phrase “a sweet smelling savour,” exposed, xi. 108
- Criminals*, ancient mode of treating, iii. 177—a phrase applied to the unconverted, iii. 178
- Cromwell*, Oliver, his interference, &c., on behalf of the Vaudois, vii. 461
- Cross of Christ*, the grand touchstone of the Christian, ii. 379—the general meaning of the phrase, iii. 56—gloried in because of its antiquity, iii. 57—why despised by the Jew and the Greek, iii. 58—an important part of the revelation of the New Testament, iii. 59—affords the only ground of confidence to the penitent, iii. 61—moral effects of the doctrine of, iii. 62—how it has been abused, iii. 66—priestly office of Christ attested at, iii. 397—the humiliation and glory of, iv. 111—character of the sacrifice exhibited upon it, viii. 541, *et seq.* See *Sacrifice*.
- Crucifixion of Christ*, scenes at the, confirmatory of his mission, iii. 310—the day of, the period of the fountain being opened, iii. 377—practical benefit in contemplating the, iii. 392—an eminent fulfilment of prophecy and type, iii. 395—and not curious coincidences, iii. 396—priestly office of Christ attested at, iii. 397—nature of the prodigies which took place at, iii. 398—humiliating character of the punishment, iv. 111—not of Jewish origin, vi. 212—circumstances connected with this event, vi. 213—custom of breaking the legs of the crucified, noticed, vi. 238
- Cry*, nature of that which will attend the coming of Christ, iv. 104
- Crystallization*, process of, in the formation of the earth, ix. 342
- Cudworth*, Ralph, D D., quoted, on the ground of moral obligation, ix. 93—on the evidence of prophecy, ix. 120—and on the doctrine of the eternity of matter, ix. 447—his definition of “infinity of duration,” examined, ix. 491, *et seq.*
- , William, the Antinomian, his unwarrantable republication of Hervey’s letters, contrary to the author’s express dying injunction, v. 215
- Cunningham*, Rev. J., M.A., his “Sermons” reviewed, viii. 235–248—general fault of his discourses, viii. 236, 238—their great theological defect, viii. 240, *et seq.*—his erroneous statement of the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, viii. 241—absurdity of the author’s scheme pointed out, viii. 243—defence of the review in

- a reply to "Clericus," viii. 258, *et seq.*
- Curcellæus*, on the idea of a conditional prescience, x. 9—on the knowledge of contingent events, x. 20—his "*De Jure Dei in Creaturas*," noticed, xi. 414
- Curiosity*, impertinent, reproved, iii. 321—how far it may be lawfully exercised, iii. 322
- Curse*, nature of that pronounced upon transgressors, vi. 83
- Cuvier*, Baron, his testimony respecting the Mosaic account of the deluge, vi. 55—his "Theory of the Earth," alluded to, ix. 339, 340—on the antiquity which is claimed by some nations, ix. 340—his objections to the Mosaic date of creation considered, ix. 341—on the contradictory speculations of geologists, ix. 346—on the scarcity of human skeletons in a fossil state, ix. 355—on the theory of life, ix. 478
- Cyprian*, on Christ being the Jehovah of the Old Testament, x. 185—acknowledged the validity of baptism by immersion and sprinkling, xii. 270
- Cyril*, Bishop of Jerusalem, his catalogue of the books of Scripture, ix. 185—on the mysteries of revelation, x. 265
- Cyrus*, a history of, viii. 479—a remarkable subject of prophecy, viii. 480—the wisdom of God in the appointment of Cyrus, viii. 481—how far he benefited by prophetic declaration, viii. 483—was of the Magian religion, ix. 42—how far he was prepared to listen to the tenets of the Jews, ix. 42
- D.
- Dalby*, Rev. W., M.A., his "Defense of some Passages in Dr. Copleston's 'Inquiry,'" reviewed, vii. 291
- Dale*, Rev. Thomas, M.A., his "Introductory Lecture in the University of London," reviewed, vii. 392–406—his anxiety to illustrate the "leading principle" of the institution, vii. 397—states the mode in which he shall discharge his duties as a professor, vii. 399—its inconsistency, vii. 400—character of the lecture, vii. 404
- Danger*, spiritual, a sense of, a concomitant of true faith, ii. 459
- Daniel*, his exemplary character, iii. 18; vi. 167—penetrated far into futurity, iii. 24—beheld the nature of the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, iii. 25—the kingdom of God alluded to by, noticed, iii. 191—a true patriot, iii. 385—chronological order of his prophecy, vi. 167—his prediction concerning the death of the Messiah, vi. 167, *et seq.*—objections against the book of, examined, ix. 268—his prediction of the overthrow of the four empires, xii. 329
- Dark ages*, deplorable state of the, adverted to, iv. 459—which is not to be attributed to Christianity, iv. 459
- Darkness*, an emblem of sin, iii. 157; viii. 490—of sorrow, iii. 158—and of ignorance, iii. 159; iv. 208—a feature of the present state of Heathenism, iii. 465—the great evil of, iv. 209—the change from darkness to light, defined, iv. 408—the Egyptian plague of, ix. 203, *et seq.*; xii. 321
- Dathe*, Jo. Aug., on the term "Angel of the Lord," x. 166—on the eternity of the Son of God, x. 231—on the phrase, "everlasting Father," x. 289
- D'Aubuisson*, on the supposed antiquity of the earth, ix. 340—objections of, to the Mosaic date of creation, ix. 341
- "*Daughters of men*," meaning of the phrase, vi. 53



- David*, a man highly favoured of Providence, ii. 398—his pride and sin in numbering the people, ii. 399; vi. 113—purchases the thrashing-floor of Araunah, ii. 400—his zeal and liberality in the service of God, ii. 415—fully appreciated the value of public worship, ii. 465—why forbidden to build a house to the Lord, ii. 465—his distinguished character, vi. 111; viii. 495—the founder of Jerusalem, vi. 112—his warlike exploits, vi. 112—his latter days, vi. 112—in what respect “a man after God’s own heart,” vi. 113; ix. 310—his advice to Solomon concerning Joab and Shimei, considered, vi. 114—why said to have been the author of the book of Psalms, vi. 163—how many are ascribed to him, vi. 163—ground of his comfort in death, viii. 496—nature of the covenant with, viii. 497, 500—how he regarded the covenant, viii. 508, *et seq.*—his conduct as a King, defended, ix. 331
- , the Lord of, spoken of as man, ii. 303—was contemplated as God, ii. 303
- , Christian, the Moravian, his sermon on the ground of faith, v. 64, *et seq.*
- Davies*, Rev. Edward, his “Mythology of the British Druids,” alluded to, ix. 50
- Davison*, Mr., on the excellency of Abel’s offering, xi. 121—his low notions of the righteousness of Abel, refuted, xi. 123—his “Inquiry into the Origin and Intent of primitive Sacrifice,” referred to, xi. 125—on the revelation, antecedent to Abel’s faith, xi. 133—perplexed by his own theory, denying that Abraham’s faith was grounded on an antecedent revelation, xi. 135—his remarks on the import of the first promise, examined, xi. 140—rejects the expiatory character of the patriarchal sacrifices, xi. 156—his objections refuted, xi. 159, *et seq.*
- Davy*, Dr., on the religion of Budhu, ix. 29—on the Cingalese notions of futurity, ix. 71
- , Sir H., F.R.S., on the few undecomposed substances, x. 51
- Dawes*, Archbishop, quoted, on the sanctification of the Sabbath, xii. 102
- Day*, end of days, fixed, iii. 34—
- in what respects they are said to be evil, iv. 200—duration of a primitive day, according to certain geologists, examined, ix. 342—absurdity of such an opinion, ix. 343
- De Luc*, on the veracity of the Mosaic chronology, ix. 340—objections of, to the Mosaic date of creation, considered, ix. 341
- Deacon*, office of, in the primitive church, defined, xii. 170
- Death*, in what respects a penalty of sin, ii. 293—a proof of the vileness of the body, ii. 387—why it is termed “sleep” in the New Testament, ii. 390—will be done away at the resurrection of the body, ii. 392—
- the Gospel triumphs over, ii. 446—of the Christian, often a judgment to survivors, iii. 7—
- in what respect the death of the righteous is a loss to the world, iii. 7, 8—often an act of mercy to the righteous, iii. 8—of the righteous, glorifying to God, iii. 9—how the Christian is the Lord’s in death, iii. 12—the universality of, noticed, iii. 17—man naturally struggles against, iii. 138—universality of, considered, iii. 249, 250—how Satan has the power of, iii. 250—and how abolished, iii. 251—deliverance from the fear of death, promised, iii. 251—the true aspect of, to the sinner, part of its sting, iii. 429—victory over, how given by Christ, iii.

433—"shadow of," import of the phrase, iv. 210—nature of the penalty of, found in the Jewish law, vi. 83—mournful views of, under the Jewish dispensation, contrasted with those under the Christian, viii. 42, *et seq.* (n)—changes effected by, noticed, viii. 442—cause of, ix. 480—nature of that, threatened on the penalty of the first man, x. 440—justice of God, manifest in this penalty, xi. 8, *et seq.*—victory over, a benefit of the atonement, xii. 13

*eath of Christ*, typical circumstances which attended the, ii. 235—was a real sacrifice, ii. 407—is apprehended as such by faith, ii. 407—important lessons taught by, ii. 408—not to be considered as that of a martyr, iii. 56—practical effects of the, iii. 66—its distinguishing peculiarity, iii. 89—was illustrative of his righteousness, iii. 166—the cause of man's redemption, iii. 248—abolishes the dominion of Satan, iii. 249—the blessings which flow to man from, iii. 313, *et seq.*—Daniel's description of the results of, iii. 386, *et seq.*—was a scene of humiliation and glory, iv. 111—a mixture of human crime and divine mercy, iv. 112—wicked men and God were accomplishing opposite purposes, iv. 114—and it was the hour of the triumph and overthrow of hell, iv. 116—necessity of, for the salvation of men, vi. 233; xi. 25—the great object contemplated in the gift of God, viii. 431—an event to Christ always foreseen, viii. 538—benefits of, alluded to, viii. 540—harmonizes with all the perfections of the Godhead, ix. 300—the Socinian view of, noticed, x. 127; xi. 24—the propitiatory character of, xi. 23, *et seq.*, 37, *et seq.*—scrip-

ture testimony, respecting, xi. 26—was vicarious, xi. 28—scripture proof of, xi. 29—objections to this doctrine, considered, xi. 29, *et seq.*—sin the impulsive cause of, xi. 31, *et seq.*—its penal character, illustrated, xi. 36—low notions of the benefits of, entertained by Socinians, xi. 38—in what sense it was a satisfaction to divine justice, xi. 70, *et seq.*—Antinomian views of, examined and refuted, xi. 75, *et seq.*—an impressive sanction of divine law, xi. 80—its sacrificial character, xi. 88—all spiritual blessings are the fruits of, xi. 167—makes salvation attainable by all men, proved to be a doctrine of Scripture, xi. 274. See *Atonement*, *Cross of Christ*, &c.

*Death*, judicial, in what it consists, ii. 4; x. 441

—spiritual, in what it consists, ii. 3; x. 441, 449—how it is the effect of sin, vi. 39

*Debt*, forgiveness of sin, represented under the idea of the free remission of a, xi. 60, 76—the mistake of confounding the cancelling a debt of judicial obligation, with the payment of a debt of money, exhibited, xi. 76

*Decalogue*, character of the, vi. 81—its obligations universal and permanent, vi. 83—differed from a municipal and political law, vi. 83—difference between, and the ceremonial law, viii. 152—authority of, established in the New Testament, xii. 30, *et seq.*

*Deceit*, a characteristic of pagan nations, ix. 80; xii. 316

*Decision*, importance of, in regard to the welfare of the soul, iii. 224—a life of, manifested in St. Paul, iii. 228

*Declaratory*, a mode of teaching, defined, iv. 188

*Decree*, import of the term, xi. 461—decrees of God, recon-

- ciled with the free agency of man, xi. 462—their conditional character, xi. 464—instances of the revocation of, xi. 465
- Dedication*, feast of, when instituted, and for what purpose, vi. 204
- Deed of declaration*, the history and execution of, among the Methodists, v. 258—the dissatisfaction which it produced, v. 258—its beneficial effects, v. 259
- Deism*, origin of, ix. 325—how far a Christian government should interfere in reference to, xii. 126. See *Infidelity*.
- Deities*, immoral character of the, of the Heathen, ix. 83
- Deity of the Holy Ghost*, Scripture proof of the, x. 362—recognised by the Patriarchs, x. 363—by the Prophets, x. 364—proved by the plural form of the name of God, x. 366—the Jewish and Apostolic mode of benediction, x. 367—by the form of baptism, x. 368—mode of subsistence in the Trinity, x. 371—is the subject of blasphemy, x. 374—is called “God,” x. 374—is possessed of divine attributes, x. 375—is the source of inspiration, x. 375—and an object of divine worship, x. 376. See *Holy Ghost*, *Personality*.
- Delany*, Patrick, D.D., quoted on the revelation from God to our progenitors, ix. 37—his “Dissertation on the Forbidden Fruit,” quoted, x. 410—on the divine origin of sacrifice, xi. 158
- Delays*, in the execution of divine purposes, no excuse for unbelief, iv. 234
- Deliverer*, general expectation of a, among nations of antiquity, ix. 51
- Delphic oracle*, the ignorance, ambiguity, and servility of, ix. 269, *et seq.*; xii. 362
- Delta*, the, defined, ix. 278
- Deluge*, the, objections of infidels to the fact of, noticed, vi. 54.—natural proofs of, vi. 55; xii. 369—Baron Cuvier’s testimony concerning the Mosaic account of, vi. 55; xii. 369—moral results of, ix. 39, 234—traditional records of, ix. 50; xii. 368—objections to the Mosaic account of, considered, ix. 351, *et seq.*—Kirwan’s testimony to the truth of, ix. 351, *et seq.*; xii. 368—philosophical testimony corroborative of, ix. 353—goodness of God manifested in, x. 75.
- Demetrius*, the maker of silver shrines, vi. 248
- Δημιουργος*, explained, iii. 443
- Demurgus*, a Gnostic title of the Deity, viii. 26; ix. 47; x. 281
- Democritus*, denied the soul’s immortality, ix. 72; xii. 313
- Demonology*, the system of, which corrupted Christianity, vi. 295
- Demons*, worshipped by the Heathen, character of those, ix. 223—a sentiment of Plutarch concerning, ix. 223—antiquity of demon-worship, ix. 223—power of, how far it extends, ix. 223, *et seq.*
- Demosthenes*, on the origin of law, ix. 33—charged the Delphic oracle with venality, xii. 363
- Dendera*, temple of, a description of the, vii. 340–343—the zodiac of the, referred to, vii. 343; ix. 340; xii. 368
- Dependence*, the universal dependence of man described, iv. 337—self-dependence a great trial of true faith, iv. 378
- Depravity*, natural, sad testimony of, ii. 305—its original cause, ii. 386—its universal character, vi. 41—the doctrine of man’s universal depravity defended, vi. 41—manifested in the condition of the Gentiles, vi. 256—a defect in Dr. Chalmers’s statement of the doctrine, examined, vii. 230—and in his notion of constitutional virtues being instinctive to man, refuted, vii. 232, *et seq.*—the specific cha-

acter of human depravity exhibited, vii. 234—a striking illustration of, viii. 3—awful effects of, in man, ix. 285—not the result of evil example, ix. 286—or education, ix. 286—how it has affected the life of man, and the globe itself, ix. 287

*rhams*, William, M.A., his “Astro-” and “Physico-Theology,” referred to, ix. 403; x. 50

*Descent into hell*, observations on that of Christ, viii. 286–319—an important branch of Christian faith, viii. 287—antiquity of the doctrine, viii. 287—opinions various, as to the object to be answered, viii. 288—definition of terms, viii. 288, *et seq.*—two regions of hades, noticed, viii. 290—entrance of Christ into one of them, viii. 291—why termed a “descent,” viii. 292—his descent into the abode of the lost, noticed, viii. 294, *et seq.*—his object in visiting both regions of hades, viii. 295—the Scripture authorities examined, viii. 296, *et seq.*—reply to the observations of “C. L.” on this subject, viii. 310–319

*Design*, marks of, in the works of God, demonstrated, ix. 404, *et seq.*—illustrated by the solar system, ix. 409—by the human body, ix. 410, *et seq.*—by the vegetable world, ix. 418—by man’s mental faculties, ix. 419, *et seq.*—by the mechanism of a watch, ix. 422, *et seq.*—by the structure and use of the eye, ix. 430, *et seq.*—by the double parts of the body, ix. 436—the configuration of its cavities, ix. 437—and the vertebral column, ix. 438

*Esire*, after spiritual blessings a concomitant of true faith, ii. 460—of man, carried to a further extent than by any other creature, iii. 137—establishment of the kingdom of Christ,

an object of, iii. 202—an essential ingredient of prayer, iv. 494—importance of, in the work of salvation, viii. 509

*Despard*, Colonel, a revolutionary Chief, noticed, vi. 379

*Destruction*, a divine work of Christ, x. 312

*Deucalion*, a mythological name for Noah, ix. 50

*Devil*, the, subject to the power and name of Christ, ii. 234—how the god of this world, ii. 295—sought to be propitiated by sacrifice by the Heathen, ii. 485—his anxiety respecting the soul of man, iii. 220—in what respects he is said to have the power of death, iii. 249—his power to tempt, considered, iii. 249—the scenes of death the territory of, iii. 250—his power over disease and death, noticed, iii. 250—spreads the terrors of death before the imagination, iii. 250—how his dominion will be abolished, iii. 251—Heathenism under the dominion of, iii. 466—effects of his reign, iii. 467—Scripture ideas of, iv. 34—objections to the existence of, noticed, iv. 34, 35—the question, Did Satan know the person of Christ, whom he assaulted? considered, iv. 35; vi. 187—conjectures respecting his mode of attack on Christ, iv. 37—is under the government of God, iv. 242—effects of his influence, considered, vi. 37—in what respect he is present every where, vi. 38—subjection among devils accounted for, vi. 38—power of, not irresistible, vi. 38—his promise to give our Lord the kingdoms of the earth, noticed, vi. 188—his strong desire to be worshipped, ix. 223—signification of the term, x. 426—his hatred towards God exemplified, x. 427—the objection that the doctrine of redemption involves the ab-

- surdity of paying a price to the devil, considered, xi. 55—nature of man's captivity to, xi. 56  
*Devotion*, a pleasure peculiar to man, ii. 69—philosophical views of, ii. 213—scriptural opinion of, ii. 215—the human body a clog to, ii. 387—the spirit of, a mark of a heart that is right with God, iii. 150—a life of, manifested in St. Paul, iii. 229—a mode of redeeming the time, iv. 199  
*Dew*, the metaphor of, ii. 312—descriptive of the multitude of the subjects of Christ, ii. 313—and of the moral beauty of his kingdom, ii. 314—its mysterious formation emblematical of the progress of the Gospel, ii. 316—the copious dews of Judea, alluded to, vi. 177  
*Diabolical possessions*, remark of Jortin on those of the age of our Lord, v. 346—are distinguished from cases of lunacy, vi. 193—why permitted in the days of our Saviour, vi. 194  
*Diana*, the temple of, vi. 248  
*Dick*, Thomas, his "Christian Philosopher," reviewed, vii. 258–263—its general defects, vii. 259—complains of the indifference of teachers of religion to philosophy, vii. 260—his complaint proved to be unfounded, vii. 260, 261—the fault he finds with Dr. Paley, vii. 262  
*Differ*, one man differing from another, examined, xi. 396  
*Difficulties*, connected with the doctrine of the Trinity, x. 133  
*Dignity of man*, in what it consists, ii. 241  
*Δικαιος*, explained, xi. 64, 211  
*Dioceses*, origin of, in the Church, xii. 176  
*Diodorus Siculus*, his allusion to Moses, ix. 150  
*Diotrephes*, his conduct alluded to, vi. 323  
*Disciples*, paid divine worship to Christ, x. 315, *et seq.*  
*Discipleship*, terms of, as laid down by Christ, iii. 5  
*Discipline*, the connexion between moral correction and discipline, noticed, ii. 76—the religion of Christ not to be viewed merely as a system of, iii. 10—part of the work of the Christian ministry to administer, iii. 100—of Christ, conformity of, with the truth and reality of things, iii. 256—possesses the approbation of God, iii. 257—the state of mind imparted to those who submit thereto, iii. 257—Mr. Wesley's strict attention to, noticed, v. 149, 152—the framework of the, of the Methodists, in the Minutes of Conference, v. 185—life, a state of, viii. 420—moral influence of, in the church of Christ, xii. 209—the rigid administration of, in the ancient church, noticed, xii. 210. See *Church-government*.  
*Disease*, bodily, a mark of the bondage of corruption, iii. 134—man naturally struggles against, iii. 137  
*Dishonour*, import of the term, as employed by St. Paul, xi. 319—vessels unto, to be distinguished from vessels of wrath, xi. 324  
*Disobedience*, punishment the penalty of, accounted for, vi. 39  
*Dispensation*, difference between the Jewish and the Christian, iv. 162—are mutual comments upon each other, iv. 277—meaning of the term, xii. 305  
*Dispensations*, providential, connexion between, and their moral ends, ii. 76—how beheld in the light of eternity, iii. 107—constitute a day of visitation, iv. 7—how affected by the atonement of Christ, xi. 168  
*Dispersion of the Jews*, considered, ix. 257, *et seq.*  
*Disquietude*, an element of repentance, iv. 314

- Dissenters*, Bogue and Bennett's History of, characterized, i. 319—Mr. Watson not a theoretic Dissenter, i. 662—why dissent is not formally professed by the Methodists, v. 333, 458—benefits they have derived from the Church of England, viii. 126—from the Greek Church, described, viii. 195, *et seq.*
- Distributive justice*, defined, x. 98; xi. 6
- District Meetings*, constitution of, vii. 113—not merely have jurisdiction over Preachers, vii. 114, *et seq.*
- *Visiting Society*, the first of which was established by the Rev. John Wesley, v. 110
- Divine agency*, in the Gospel, in the selection of instruments, ii. 446—manifested in their personal experience, ii. 447—shown in the effects produced by the Gospel, ii. 448—not recognised by Southey, as necessary to a call to the Christian ministry, v. 376—does not displace the effort of man, vi. 264—at work in the salvation of man, viii. 460
- *government*, principles and end of, ii. 256—is disclosed by the aid of meditation, ii. 257—uncompromising principles of, as connected with redemption, ii. 293
- *influence*, doctrine of, peculiar to Christianity, iv. 412—to be sought in prayer, iv. 412—objections to the doctrine, considered, iv. 413—vouchsafed in different degrees, periods, and places, v. 90—specially rested on the ministry of the Wesleys, v. 92, 437—Southey deplorably ignorant of this doctrine, v. 434—importance of, in the conversion of men, v. 435—does not displace human efforts, vi. 264—Scripture doctrine of, stated and defended, ix. 302, *et seq.*—not opposed to man's free agency, ix. 304—adaptation of, to the moral condition of man, ix. 305, *et seq.*—unfolds an affecting view of the divine character, ix. 306—doctrine of, destroyed on the Socinian scheme, x. 129
- Divine nature*, in what sense Christians partake of the, iii. 291
- Divorce*, degenerated into a matter of caprice among Jews and Gentiles, ix. 79
- Docetæ*, leading error of the, vi. 320—refuted in the Epistle of St. John, vi. 320—opinions of, stated, viii. 49—prevailed when St. John wrote his first Epistle, viii. 50—the tenets of, alluded to, x. 213, 343
- Doctrines*, Christian, inculcated by the miracles of Christ, ii. 230—are divinely revealed, ii. 320—antiquity of, ii. 331—the divinity of, a seal upon the claims of Christ, iii. 308—rejection of, by the Jews, considered, iv. 2—as taught by Methodists settled, v. 157—not capable of philosophic demonstration, vii. 177—relation of doctrinal truth to Christian practice, vii. 189—peculiarity of the doctrines of Mr. Wesley, vii. 419, *et seq.*—the preservation of sound doctrine, a special end of church government, xii. 199
- Dodd*, Dr. William, is visited by Mr. Wesley, while under sentence of death, v. 150
- Doddridge*, Philip, D.D., Mr. Wesley's interview with, v. 142—a comparative estimate of his hymns, v. 297—on the term "revelation," ix. 97—his numerous definitions of a miracle, noticed, ix. 101—on the permission of moral evil, x. 90—on the unity of the three persons in the Godhead, x. 114—on the title of Christ, "God blessed for ever," x. 217—on the phrase, "Spirit of holiness," as applied to the

- divine nature of Christ, vii. 15; x. 247—on the vicarious character of the death of Christ, xi. 30—on the Jews as vessels of wrath, xi. 328—on the exercise of parental government, xii. 143
- Dodwell*, Henry, Esq., on the personality and Deity of the Holy Ghost, x. 378
- Dolomieu*, on the veracity of the Mosaic chronology, ix. 340
- Dort*, Synod of, description of the v. 225—on the universality of the command to believe the Gospel, xi. 298—quoted, on the call of the elect, xi. 300—on the doctrine of election, xi. 347–356—in which it is opposed to Scripture, xi. 347, 358—text of Scripture, on which the Synod grounds the doctrine of election, examined, xi. 361, *et seq.*—on the doctrine of “effectual calling,” xi. 370—decision of, on the doctrine of predestination, xi. 432, *et seq.*—and its refutation, xi. 432, *et seq.*
- Double sense of prophecy*, observations on the, ix. 248
- Douglas*, John, D. D., his refutation of “Hume on Miracles,” ix. 108—on the pretended heathen miracles, ix. 232
- Doxologies of Scripture*, importance of the, x. 327
- D'Oyley*, Dr., his Commentary quoted, on the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, xi. 256
- Drawing of the Father*, meaning of the phrase, xi. 380
- Dream*, of Jacob, concerning the ladder, vi. 69
- Druids*, the religion of, alluded to, ii. 356—traditions among, respecting the deluge, ix. 50
- Dublin*, excitement produced in, on Mr. Wesley employing lay-Preachers to assist in administering the sacrament, v. 271
- Dubois*, Abbé, his “Letters on the State of Christianity in India,” reviewed, vii. 314–326—object contemplated in their publication, vii. 314—his opinion of the dispute between the Jesuits in India and the Pope, vii. 316—his account of the present state of Christianity in India, among the Catholics, vii. 317—his own attempts towards Christianizing India, examined, vii. 319, *et seq.*—his shameful efforts at accommodating Christianity to Paganism, vii. 320—his exclusion of the Scriptures, vii. 322 failure of his mission, vii. 323—*et seq.*—his “Manners of the Hindoos,” referred to, on the prevalence of human sacrifice, ix. 83
- Duelling*, the great criminality of, xii. 120
- Duns Scotus*, his theological system, xi. 417
- Duties*, which men owe to God, xii. 44—internal, xii. 44—and external, xii. 53, *et seq.*—which we owe to our neighbour, xii. 103, *et seq.*—of husbands and wives, xii. 127, *et seq.*—of children and parents, xii. 135, *et seq.*—of masters and servants, xii. 144, *et seq.*
- Dwelling-place of the most High*, Scripture views of, iv. 227
- Dwight*, Timothy, LL.D. his refutation of “Hume on Miracles,” ix. 108—on the relation between cause and effect, ix. 386
- “*Dying for us*,” import of the phrase, xi. 29, *et seq.*, 274

## E.

- Eagles*, why the Romans were compared to, vi. 207
- Earth*, why it was made for the Son, ii. 286—the term “earth” as applied to the Jewish state, iii. 403—the revolutions of, compared to those of a wheel, iv. 262—how it has been affected by the fall, ix. 287—original formation of, ix. 342
- Earthly things*, character of, ii. 383

- Earthquake*, Mr. C. Wesley's account of one in London, v. 196—Mr. Briggs's description of the same in a letter to Mr. John Wesley, v. 196, 197
- Eat and live*, the term of the covenant of paradise, and of grace, iii. 72
- Ebion*, an account of, viii. 51—statement of the tenets of, viii. 66—rejected a part of Matthew's Gospel, viii. 67
- Ecclesiastes*, the book of, when written, vi. 115, 165—the author of, vi. 115, 165
- Εχθρος*, explained, xi. 45
- Economical justice*, defined, xii. 127
- Edda*, the, a quotation from, on the term "hell," viii. 290—  
—alluded to, respecting the creation, ix. 47—the fall of man, ix. 48—and the serpent, ix. 49—a description of hell found in it, ix. 49, 50—tradition respecting the deluge, ix. 50
- Eden*, the garden of, represented as a natural temple, iii. 68—man's expulsion from, iii. 70—awful effects of the entry of sin, iii. 350—a solemn and impressive type, iii. 351—why guarded against man, iii. 354
- Edomites*, no proof that they were excluded from the mercies of God, xi. 332—Prideaux's testimony respecting them, xi. 333
- Education*, religious education, a work of the highest patriotism, i. 63, 64—every system of education radically defective, if religion form not a component part, i. 247; ii. 55—the mournful testimony of antiquity to this truth, i. 248, 249; ii. 49—religious education enforced on the ground of the immortality of man, i. 250; ii. 62—negroes can only be efficiently instructed by Christian Missionaries, i. 592—why no express precept for, is found in the discourses of Christ, ii. 43—remarks on the phrase, "he is educated," ii. 44—importance of religious instruction, ii. 45—definition of the term "education," ii. 46—truths which should form the subject of education, ii. 47–50—defective mode of teaching morality, iv. 468—of the poor, great importance of, v. 468, *et seq.*—encouraged among the Jews, vi. 96—evil to the church, of educating youth to the ministry, irrespective of piety, vii. 185—not the cause of the immorality of the lower orders, vii. 167—of the poor, how conducted in Scotland, vii. 276; and in England, vii. 277—evil of, unconnected with religion, vii. 279, 280, 396—not necessarily unfriendly to Popery, vii. 446—encouragement to, in South America, noticed, viii. 217, *et seq.*—depravity of man not the result of, ix. 286—the theory which attributes the wickedness of man to a vicious education, examined, x. 477, *et seq.*
- Edwards*, Bryan, his account of the superstition of *obia*, as practised in the West Indies, vi. 469
- , Jonathan, President, his "Distinguishing Marks of a Work of God," quoted, v. 418—his work on "Religious Affections," noticed, v. 447—account of a remarkable revival at Northampton, v. 522—on the foreknowledge of God, x. 38—on the creation of man in the image of God, in answer to Dr. Taylor, x. 390, 398—on the penalty of death due on Adam's transgression, x. 443—in what original sin consists, x. 483—quoted, on the freedom of the will of man in connexion with the doctrine of philosophical necessity, xi. 484
- , Peter, on the Scripture



- authority, for infant baptism, xii. 248, *et seq.*
- Effectual calling*, this Calvinistic phrase not countenanced in Scripture, xi. 366—the texts on which the doctrine is supposed to be grounded, examined, xi. 369, *et seq.*
- Effort of man*, how it is needful in his own salvation, viii. 461
- Egypt*, the character of, as a nation, iii. 183—why the government of, oppressed the Israelites, vi. 73—synagogues in, vi. 124—temple built by Onias, for the Jews there, noticed, vi. 125—interesting recollections of, vii. 336—present state of, vii. 338—on the antiquities of, vii. 344—importance of the distribution of the Scriptures there, vii. 347—use of hieroglyphics in, viii. 160—origin of idolatry in, viii. 169—why shepherds were hateful to Egyptians, viii. 177—national animosities of, viii. 179—rites of, performed in regard to the dead, viii. 182, *et seq.*—how far the true God was acknowledged in, ix. 40—moral result of the plagues of, ix. 40, 234—opinions of, concerning the soul, ix. 67—ancient Egypt, defined, ix. 278—fulfilment of prophecies respecting, noticed, ix. 279
- Ejaculatory prayer*, importance of, x. 319; xii. 63—its nature, xii. 63. See *Prayer*.
- Elders*, the, the faith of, considered, xi. 128, 148, *et seq.*—was connected with some antecedent revelation, xi. 128—of the primitive church, described, xii. 173—and of the synagogue, xii. 174, 175
- Eleazer*, the Scribe, a martyr for the truth, vi. 128
- Elect*, the, the Calvinistic application of the terms “all men,” and “the world,” to, considered, xi. 279—the term “world” never in scripture applied to, xi. 281—scriptures examined which are supposed to favour a restricted sense of the terms, xi. 283. See *Election*, *Calvinistic controversy*.
- “*Elect lady*,” to whom St. John’s second Epistle was addressed, vi. 322
- Election of the Gentiles*, to church privileges, vi. 261—personal election mentioned in the Scriptures, what, vi. 263—as taught by the primitive Fathers, not that of Calvinism, viii. 479—scripture views of the term, xi. 304—three kinds of, noticed, xi. 305—the term applied to bodies of Christians, considered, xi. 306—nothing in the doctrine of, to limit the extent of the atonement, xi. 308—scripture account of the ancient election of the Jews, xi. 309—of the Christian church, xi. 310, *et seq.*—the distinction between a personal and collective election, noticed, xi. 311, *et seq.*—nature of the election spoken of in the 9th, 10th, and 11th chapters of the Romans, xi. 312—no unrighteousness in the original election of the Jews, xi. 316—unconditional election, defined, xi. 329—nature of that taught by the Apostles, xi. 331—instances of unconditional election referred to, xi. 331—not always followed by faith, xi. 331—instances of non-election, not always followed with destruction, xi. 332—that taught in the 11th chapter to the Romans, shown to be conditional, xi. 334—Calvinistic objections to this doctrine, examined, xi. 335, *et seq.*—the term not confined to the spiritual Israelites, xi. 336—the end of, the election of bodies of men, considered, xi. 342—this proved to be sovereign and unconditional, xi. 342—personal election, the doctrine of, examined, xi. 345, *et seq.*—defini-

- tion of the term, xi. 346—the idea of eternal election absurd, xi. 346—the Calvinistic notion of an eternal personal election, exploded, xi. 346, *et seq.*—is irreconcilable with the perfections of the Godhead, xi. 350, *et seq.*—general Calvinistic notions of, inconsistent, xi. 356—election without respect of faith, contrary to the first constitution of the church, xi. 357, *et seq.*—texts of Scripture, where personal election is alluded to, considered, xi. 358, *et seq.*—and also passages where the term alludes to a body of believers, examined, xi. 361, *et seq.*—scripture on which the Synod of Dort grounds the doctrine of, considered, xi. 361, *et seq.*—general meaning of the terms “calling” and “election,” xi. 366, *et seq.*—terms “elect unbelievers,” unknown in Scripture, xi. 365—sentiments of John Calvin on the subject, considered and considered, xi. 405, *et seq.* See *Calvinistic controversy*.
- Ελεγχος*, explained, v. 161, 164, 166
- Elements of the world*, meaning of the phrase, viii. 37
- Elephants*, how employed in oriental warfare, viii. 92
- Elevation of the host*, import of this Popish ceremony, xii. 289
- Eli*, the fate of the house of, considered, xi. 465, *et seq.*
- Elijah*, his appearance at the transfiguration, iii. 86—its object considered, iii. 89
- Ellis*, John, D. D., his “Knowledge of Divine things;” quoted, on the ever-varying opinion of human reason, vii. 48—on the imperfection of human reason, vii. 50—on the difference between the objects of human knowledge and divine, vii. 57—on the rule which determines the quality of moral actions, ix. 10—on the necessity of revelation, to ascertain the existence of God, ix. 375—and on the use of rational evidence, ix. 378
- Elohim*, a word indicative of a trinity of persons in the Godhead, vi. 20
- Elopement of a daughter*, from her parents’ house, when criminal, xii. 140
- Elsner*, Jacob, on the phrase, “the form of God,” x. 338
- Elysian fields* of the poets, origin of, viii. 184
- Embalming*, Egyptian method of, viii. 183
- Emigrants*, French, reply of Britain to the Government of France concerning, vi. 382
- Emmanuel*, import of the name, considered, iii. 240—attempt of “the Improved Version of the New Testament,” respecting this title of Christ, x. 202—defined as a proper title of Christ, x. 203—Bishop Pearson on the etymology of, x. 204
- Emmaus*, conversation of Christ, while journeying thither, iv. 75—for what this place was distinguished, vi. 175
- Emory*, Rev. John, D. D., a deputation from the American to the English Conference, viii. 340
- Εμπροσθεν*, explained, x. 150
- “*Emptied himself*,” an inexplicable phrase, ii. 434; iii. 85
- Enchantments of the Egyptian magicians*, considered, ix. 216—their object, examined, ix. 219—H. Farmer’s observations on, ix. 236, *et seq.*
- Encyclopedia Britannica*, an article in the, on the Zodiac of Dendera, alluded to, vii. 343
- End of all things*, apathy of men concerning, iii. 23—end of providential dispensations, alluded to, iii. 24—end of the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, referred to, iii. 25—end of the world, considered, iii. 26—end

- of our days fixed, iii. 34—the phrase “then cometh the end,” explained, iii. 233
- Endor*, witch of, her character, vi. 110—the feats of, ix. 215, 220
- Enemies of Christ*, nature of the, ii. 305—secret enemies the most to be dreaded, iii. 55
- England*, remarkable interposition of Providence in the political affairs of, ii. 36–39—mercies vouchsafed to, demand gratitude, iv. 521—apostrophe addressed to, ii. 470—state of religion in, at the commencement of the career of the Wesleys, v. 60, 452—reason of France declaring war against, vi. 369—her elevated position in the struggle against France, vi. 370—effects of the revolutionizing principles of France in, vi. 370—noble stand of the Government of, against the encroachments of France, vi. 388—her treatment of Russia at the commencement of the late war, censured, vi. 403, *et seq.*—state of education of the poor in, vii. 277
- English translation of the Bible*, its high character, vi. 174
- Enjoyment*, perfect, not to be realized on earth, iii. 30
- Enlightened*, scripture import of the phrase, xi. 290
- Enmity*, nature of that which exists in God, xi. 45—and that of the carnal mind, xi. 45
- Enoch*, his character, iii. 3—his translation, what it represented, iii. 441 ; vi. 53
- Enthusiasm*, instances of, in early Methodism, considered, v. 88—Wesley and Whitefield defended from the imputation of, v. 89—Southey’s charge of, upon the founders of Methodism, considered, v. 386—Bishop Taylor equally chargeable with Mr. Wesley, v. 386, 388—the doctrine of assurance attributed to, by Southey, v. 392—proper religious enthusiasm, defined, v. 439—that which is culpable, described, v. 440—extract from Mr. Wesley’s sermon on, v. 441
- Επερωτημα*, explained, xii. 236
- Ephesus*, the church of, strongly attached to St. Paul, iv. 531—powerful effect of the Gospel in this city, vi. 248—Epistle to the church at, when written, vi. 280—city of, where situated, vi. 280—unlawful arts practised there, vi. 280—no glaring faults charged on this church, vi. 281—often agitated by the Jewish members of the church, vi. 281—Paul’s prayer for the Christians at, considered, vi. 283
- , Council of, when held, xii. 200—the heresy which it refuted, xii. 200
- Ephori*, cruelties practised by the, ix. 77
- Ephraim*, the city of, where situated, vi. 176
- Epictetus*, allusion of, to Jesus Christ, ix. 168—on the Jewish baptism of proselytes, xii. 247
- Epicureans*, opinions of the, viii. 23—their notions respecting the providence of God, ix. 65 ; xii. 313—denied the soul’s immortality, ix. 72 ; xii. 313
- Epiphanius*, his catalogue of the books of Scripture, ix. 185—his testimony fatal to the notion of an apostolical succession, xii. 180
- Episcopacy*, the divine right of, not supported by the New Testament, xii. 179—scriptural objection to, specified, xii. 179—how far beneficial, xii. 180. See *Bishops*.
- Episcopus*, Simon, remarks on the opinions of, vii. 500—on the theory “*Scientia Media*,” x. 9—quoted on the doctrine of the divine Sonship of Christ, x. 259—on the moral agency of man, x. 418, 422—

- on the prohibition under which our progenitors were placed, x. 426—and on the character of the divine pre-science, xi. 472
- Equality of condition*, absurdity of the doctrine of, xii. 144
- Equivalent*, the term how far proper, applied to the death of Christ, xi. 74—the Antinomian perversion of the term, refuted, xi. 75
- Erasmus*, his objectionable interpretation of Scripture, alluded to, x. 216—on the term “Spirit of Holiness,” applied to the divine nature of Christ, x. 248—and on the custom of baptizing by sprinkling, xii. 270
- Εργασθε*, explained, v. 229
- Errors*, connected with the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, considered, iv. 296—are closely interwoven with the truth, iv. 374
- Erskine*, Rev. James, his character, and correspondence of Mr. Wesley with, v. 118
- , Thomas, Esq., Advocate, his “Essay on Faith,” reviewed, vii. 200–226—the way in which he sacrifices the Divines to meet the philosophers, on the subject of faith, vii. 201—his definition of faith, examined, vii. 203, *et seq.*—his views of faith collected from his Essay, vii. 204, *et seq.*—his notions of justifying faith, refuted, vii. 206, *et seq.*—his bad criticism and divinity, exhibited, vii. 209—his philosophy of faith, vii. 209, *et seq.*—a striking specimen of mystification, vii. 211—unscriptural character of his theory, vii. 213, 214—his erroneous mode of connecting faith and justification, vii. 219, *et seq.*—cause of the failure of this “Essay,” vii. 222—a summary of its leading errors, vii. 223—on the internal evidence of a revelation, ix. 123—on the consistency of the doctrine of atonement with the divine perfections, ix. 300, *et seq.*—his “Remarks on the Internal Evidence of Revealed Religion,” characterized, ix. 302—on the righteousness of God in the doctrine of the atonement, xi. 81
- Esau*, his sin in selling his birth-right, vi. 68—curious conjectures concerning his goodly raiment, vii. 353—no proof that his posterity were excluded from the mercies of God, xi. 333—the non-election of his posterity, xi. 336
- Esneh*, temple of, researches of Champollion concerning, viii. 185—absurdity of infidels, respecting, viii. 185—the Zodiac of, alluded to, viii. 185; ix. 340; xii. 368. See *D.ndera*.
- Establishments*, religious, Dr. Chalmers’s view of, vii. 289
- Eternal death*, the penalty threatened on the sin of Adam, x. 442—the objections of Socinians to this doctrine examined, x. 443—defined, x. 450—the justice of such a penalty, x. 450, *et seq.*
- *duration*, as applied to God, ix. 489
- *generation*, propriety of the term, vii. 79, *et seq.*
- *life*, treasured up in the knowledge of Christ, ii. 431—meaning of the phrase, viii. 435
- *now*, impropriety of the phrase, ix. 490
- *purpose*, why the term is so often used by St. Paul, xi. 387
- Eternity*, interminable character of, iii. 34—bright views of, granted to persevering piety, iii. 263
- *of Christ*, scripture proof of, x. 289
- *of God*, defined, ix. 367, 486, *et seq.*—scripture views of, ix. 487—metaphysical refinements of the doctrine of, ix. 489, *et seq.*

- Ethical justice*, defined, xii. 109
- Eucharist*, the, a figurative rite, ii. 327—and a positive institution of Christianity, iii. 60—exhibiting the priestly work of Christ, iii. 60—administration of, why granted by the Methodist Conference to the societies, v. 461; vii. 140—import of the ordinance, vi. 210—names given to the institution, vi. 210—obligatory nature of this ordinance, vi. 212—objections of the early Methodists to receive it at the hands of irreligious Clergymen, vii. 140—a monument of the truth of Gospel history, ix. 161—why termed a “sacrament,” xii. 212—on the agreement and difference between baptism and the Lord’s supper, xii. 286—instituted in the place of the passover, xii. 286—and intended to be a standing rite, xii. 287—the monstrous theory of the Church of Rome concerning the, examined, xii. 288, *et seq.*—views of, entertained by Luther, xii. 290—by Carlostadt, xii. 291—by Calvin and the Reformed Church, xii. 293—and by the Church of England, xii. 295—its sacramental character established, xii. 296—is a sign and seal, xii. 297—character of those who should partake of it, xii. 298—import of the phrase “partaking unworthily” of the ordinance, xii. 298—ought not to be surrounded with superstitious terrors, xii. 299—how often it should be celebrated, xii. 299—a neglect of the institution highly censurable, xii. 300. See *Baptism, Sacrament.*
- Eunuch of Ethiopia*, his baptism, xii. 278
- Euphronius*, reply to, on “the witness of the Spirit,” viii. 251–257—observations on a second letter from, viii. 269, *et seq.*
- Eusebius*, his reference to traditionary records concerning the deluge, ix. 50—his testimony fatal to the idea of an apostolical succession, xii. 180
- Eutyches*, the error of, x. 343; xii. 200
- Evangelists*, why the writers of the Gospels are so called, vi. 170—do not copy from one another, vi. 171—internal evidence of their authenticity, vi. 171—on the credibility of the, ix. 164, *et seq.*—nature of their office in the primitive church, vi. 284; xii. 170
- “*Everlasting Father*,” the phrase considered, x. 289
- Evidence of the Gospel*, character of the, ii. 308—is various and decisive, ii. 321—external evidence of a revelation, ix. 97, *et seq.*—internal evidence, considered, ix. 121, *et seq.*, 282—comparative view of miracles and prophecy, ix. 124—the relative value of external and internal evidence, ix. 127, 282—collateral evidence, importance of, ix. 129
- Evil*, prudently anticipated, a motive to exertion, ii. 357—in what respect our days said to be evil, iv. 200—the permission of, noticed, vi. 36; viii. 492—natural evil inflicted by the Most High, viii. 493—to what attributed by the ancient philosophers, ix. 65—views taken of, as existing in the world, x. 61—moral good, often the result of positive evil, x. 66—distinction between self-inflicted and inevitable evils, considered x. 67—the existence of, how compatible with the goodness of God, x. 81, *et seq.*—on the origin of, x. 81, *et seq.*, 420—blasphemy in making God the author of, x. 82—“day of evil,” import of the phrase, xi. 390
- spirits*, the subordination, order, and government among, vi. 287—power of, how far it extends, ix. 223, *et seq.*—Augustine on the knowledge of,

- ix. 224—no real prediction ever uttered by, ix. 227—are under control, ix. 229—moral ends answered in the agency of, ix. 229, *et seq.*
- Example*, important results of a good, ii. 356—depravity of man not to be attributed to, ix. 286—the theory which accounts for the wickedness of man by referring to the influence of evil example, examined, x. 475, *et seq.*
- *of Christ*, character of the, ii. 435
- Existence of God*, a truth assumed by the scripture writers, ix. 370—only known by revelation, ix. 375—argument in favour of, ix. 388, *et seq.*—true idea of the necessary existence of God, stated, ix. 459
- Exodus*, the, from Egypt, its bearing on the interests of religion, ii. 464—meaning of the phrase, vi. 72
- Experience*, testimony of, to the ultimate success of the Gospel, ii. 16—a proof of the certainty of the knowledge of Christ, iii. 48—of Christians, illustrates the stability of the counsels of God, iii. 305—of the truth of the Gospel, proof of its stability, iii. 342—Christian experience often denied by man, iv. 360—utter absurdity of such conduct, iv. 361—gratitude for blessings of Christian experience, demanded, iv. 524—Southey's *slurs* on the term "Christian experience," v. 411—character of, changed, on the Socinian scheme, x. 126
- Expositors of Scripture*, various classes of, viii. 72
- "*Express image of his person*," the phrase explained, x. 250
- Extempore prayer*, objections to the use of, examined, xii. 79. See *Prayer*.
- Extravagancies of Methodism*, Southey's remarks upon the, animadverted on, v. 424—not much importance placed upon them by Mr. Wesley, v. 428—Southey's defective mode of reasoning, respecting, v. 431—are considered by the Laureat as the occurrence of "a new disease," v. 438
- Extreme unction*, absurdity of the Popish doctrine of, xii. 215
- Eye*, those in the wheels in Ezekiel's vision, explained, iv. 267—an illustration of design in the works of God, ix. 430, *et seq.*
- *of God*, notice of, approbation and acceptance, ii. 466
- Ezekiel*, his vision of the dry bones, explained, ii. 2—his character as a Prophet, iv. 257—his induction into the prophetic office, iv. 257—his vision of the cherubim and chariot, &c., iv. 258—on the sublimity and occasional obscurity of his style, vi. 150, *et seq.*—the peculiar character of his predictions, vi. 167—defended against the assault of Thomas Paine, ix. 277
- Ezra*, his diligence in teaching the law to the people, iv. 510—and collecting the sacred books, vi. 118
- F.
- Faber*, Rev. G. S., his "Horæ Mosaicæ," alluded to, ix. 47—quoted, on the "Python" of the Greek mythology, ix. 49—on the traditions concerning the deluge, ix. 50—on the authenticity and credibility of the Pentateuch, ix. 174, *et seq.*—and on the institution of expiatory sacrifices, xi. 165
- Face*, the phrase "face of Jesus Christ," explained, iv. 133
- Faction*, has no regard to the most venerable and holy men, vi. 274
- Faith*, the nature, trial, and reward of Christian faith, i. 131—133—importance of, in the dying hour, i. 508—is peculiar to Christianity ii. 82—philosophical views of, noticed, ii. 213

—what it is, in the sense of Scripture, ii. 214—duty and necessity of, as taught by the miracles of Christ, ii. 231—described as an act of trust as well as assent, ii. 231—of the Centurion, noticed, ii. 232—of the afflicted father, ii. 232—and of the Syro-Phenician woman, described, ii. 233—consequences of a true faith, defined, ii. 237—joyful declaration of, in the establishment of the church, ii. 349—a principle of, is to govern in the exercise of benevolence, ii. 362—is necessary to apprehend the sacrifice of Christ, ii. 405—defective faith, described, ii. 458 cause of defect, specified, ii. 460—the grounds of faith, mentioned, ii. 461—a grand realizing principle, iii. 64—that which influenced Moses, noticed, iii. 184—the object, nature, and effects of Christian faith, iii. 232—the rock of our faith, described, iii. 302—is necessary to the repossession of paradise, iii. 361—the evil and unreasonableness of religious doubting, iii. 421—is the antagonist of earthliness, iii. 441—the object of Abraham's faith, noticed, iii. 441—in the power of God, value of, iv. 228—in the wisdom of God, necessity of, iv. 230, *et seq.*—an expression of the judgment, intellectually considered, iv. 348—general faith distinguished from that which is saving, iv. 367—value of, considered intellectually, iv. 369—its trial, iv. 373—is tried by sophistry, iv. 374–376; by practical unbelief, iv. 376; by self dependence, iv. 378; and affliction, iv. 379—shield of, described, iv. 435—an essential principle of devotion, iv. 494—on the ground of, v. 64—views of, entertained in the early Minutes of the Methodist Conference, illustrated, v. 161—extract

from the Homily on Faith, v. 404—intimately connected with holy affections and works, vi. 265—weak brethren, mentioned by Paul, who they were, vi. 265—faith of the elders of the Jewish Church, illustrated, vi. 312—implies the insufficiency of man, vi. 354—existence of, incompatible with Dr. Clarke's principles of scripture interpretation, vii. 57—Locke's definition of, vii. 58—Erskine's "Essay on Faith," reviewed, vii. 200–226—the true operation of faith illustrated, vii. 221, 222—the scriptural doctrine of faith, stated, vii. 224, *et seq.*—an important part of Christian morality, x. 120—a point of duty, x. 121—character of Abel's faith, xi. 124, *et seq.*, 154—and of the elders', described, xi. 128, *et seq.*, 148, *et seq.*—imputation of, for righteousness, considered, xi. 203, *et seq.*—scriptural character of the doctrine, xi. 203—ancient testimonies in favour of, xi. 206, *et seq.*—nature of that faith which is imputed, xi. 211—true faith is personal and appropriating, xi. 257—the Calvinistic view of that which is enjoined on all, xi. 297—scriptural personal election, not irrespective of faith, xi. 357. See *Justifying faith*. *Faithfulness*, law of, in the exercise of charity, ii. 348

————— *of God*, considered, x. 105

*Fall of man*, not decreed, but foreseen, ii. 293—the critical moment when it occurred, ii. 332—the awful loss which man then experienced, iii. 351–354—ancient traditions respecting the, noticed, ix. 48—origin of the phrase "fall of man," x. 401—this fearful event considered, x. 401, *et seq.*—history of the transaction, x. 401, *et seq.*—fundamental truths discovered in this doctrine, x. 401,

- et seq.*—various theories respecting the, noticed, x. 402—by some viewed as fabulous, x. 402—the Mosaic account of, stated and defended, x. 403—absurdity of regarding the history of, allegorical, x. 405—is confirmed in the New Testament, x. 406—objections to the historical account of, examined, x. 407—observations on the instrument of man's fall, x. 409—the literal sense of the history supported by tradition, x. 412—observations on the theory that the history of the fall is partly literal and allegorical, x. 415, *et seq.*—the mystical and spiritual application of the doctrine, considered, x. 416, *et seq.*—the real agent in the seduction of man, noticed, x. 426—the state into which the fall reduced the posterity of man, considered, x. 433, *et seq.*—the penalty of death noticed, x. 442—in what sense Adam is the representative of the human family, x. 445—justice of God in the threatened penalty, x. 450, *et seq.*—infants, how affected by, x. 452
- False Christs*, notices of, ix. 226—moral ends answered in the agency of, ix. 231
- *prophets*, mentioned in Deuteronomy, described, ix. 229
- *teachers*, in the church at Philippi, referred to, ii. 371—the church at Corinth in great danger from them, vi. 268
- *witnesses*, character of those who appeared against Christ, vii. 25
- Falsehood*, a distinguishing characteristic of heathen nations, ix. 80; xii. 316
- Family*, effects of Christianity upon a, iv. 523—domestic mercies to be remembered, iv. 523—important character of a religious family, xii. 69
- *prayer*, importance of, xii. 64—the obligation of family worship, considered, xii. 65—the worship of the patriarchs, domestic, xii. 67—the duty of, binding upon all, xii. 68—enforced by examples, xii. 68—and by the sacred character of the father and head of a family, xii. 69—advantages of, imperfectly stated by Paley, xii. 69
- Family worship*, the peculiar character of ancient devotion, ii. 410—essential to happiness, iv. 501. See *Family prayer*.
- Fanaticism*, nature of, ii. 269—how distinguished from a right state of feeling, iv. 353—not the cause of the moral wretchedness of the lower orders, vii. 167
- Farmer*, Hugh, on the power to work miracles, ix. 101—and on the enchantments of Egypt, ix. 218, 236
- Fashion of opinion*, deprecated, iv. 515
- Fatalism*, destructive of the doctrine of Divine Providence, ix. 66
- Father*, God the Father of all mankind, iv. 62; viii. 489—all mankind once equally shared in the benefits of the Father's house, iv. 63
- Fathers*, the, influence of the Platonic philosophy upon, viii. 59—testimony of, to the integrity and uncorruptness of the Scriptures, ix. 194—testimonies of, that Christ was the Jehovah of the Old Testament, x. 184, *et seq.*
- Favour of God*, renewed assurances of the, in the worship of God, iii. 147—specially vouchsafed to persevering piety, iii. 262
- Fear*, what kind of, ought always to be experienced on earth, iii. 30—God a refuge from, iv. 27
- *of God*, its legitimate character, iv. 165—a leading duty of man, xii. 51—its true nature, xii. 51—the term used to represent the whole of practical



- religion, xii. 51—the salutary influence of, xii. 52
- Feasts of the Jews*, alluded to, iv. 98—why our Lord founded many parables on the notion of a feast, vi. 183
- Feelings*, a seal of inward religion, iv. 352—are powerfully influenced by religious principle, iv. 353—how distinguished from fanaticism, iv. 353, 354
- Feet*, shod with the preparation of the Gospel, &c., explained, iv. 434
- Fellowship*, enjoyed by those who build the church, ii. 341—with the whole body of Israel, a privilege of the Christian, ii. 376—with angels, ii. 376—and with God, ii. 377—duty of church fellowship, stated, iii. 20—with God, enjoined, viii. 396
- Female disciples*, character of those who ministered to Christ, vi. 192
- Fidus*, an African Bishop, his application to Cyprian, on the subject of infant baptism, xii. 265
- Fiery darts*, of the wicked, iv. 435
- Fifth-monarchy men*, alluded to, xii. 125
- Fig-tree*, the cursing of the, illustrated, vi. 194
- Figurative language*, of Scripture, remarks on the, xi. 112
- “*Fill all things*,” the phrase, applied to Christ, explained, viii. 306
- Finished salvation*, not accomplished on the cross, and why, iii. 446
- Fire*, why the Almighty is called “a consuming fire,” iii. 408—faith, tried as by, explained, iv. 374—holy fire of the altar, wanting in the second temple, vi. 120—an object of adoration among the Persians, ix. 54
- Firmament*, meaning of the term, ix. 347
- First-born*, church of the, described, iv. 424; vi. 315—destruction of the, in Egypt, ix. 204
- First cause*, arguments in proof of a great, considered, ix. 376, *et seq.*
- *fruits*, meaning of the term, ii. 389—of the Spirit, described, iii. 139
- “*Fishers of men*,” why this phrase was applied to the Apostles of Christ, ii. 230
- Fleetwood*, William, Bishop, his “*Essay on Miracles*,” quoted, ix. 215—and also his sermons on “*Relative Duties*,” xii. 147
- Flesh*, scriptural signification of the term, ii. 434—an arm of, man’s proneness to trust to, iv. 378—the term “*flesh*,” as contrasted with “*spirit*,” explained, x. 472
- Fletcher*, Rev. John, peculiarly adapted for the work he accomplished, ii. 447—Mr. Wesley’s laconic notice of the death of, v. 191—on the ravages of Antinomianism, v. 229—on the salvability of the Heathen, v. 232—on works, a condition of salvation, v. 233—remarks on the term “*merit*,” v. 234, 235—enters upon the Calvinistic controversy in defence of Mr. Wesley, v. 235—his “*Checks to Antinomianism*,” noticed, v. 240—his character as a controvertist, v. 240—on the doctrine of transubstantiation, vii. 70
- , Rev. Jos., D.D., his “*Lectures on the Principles of the Roman Catholic Religion*,” his discourse on “*the Protestant Reformation vindicated*,” and his discourse “*On the Prophecies concerning Antichrist*,” reviewed, vii. 441–453—character of his writings, vii. 450
- Floralia*, an impure festival of the Romans, ix. 83
- Flying*, of an angel in the midst of heaven, explained, iv. 161
- Fontenelle*, M. de, his “*History of Oracles*,” noticed, ix. 228

*Foreknow*, general meaning of the term, xi. 372, *et seq.*

*Foreknowledge of God*, does not prevent him dealing with us as free agents, vi. 191—to foreknow is not to necessitate, vi. 192—compatible with human agency, vii. 308, *et seq.*—denied by Cicero, ix. 64—defined, x. 8—the leading theories of, considered, x. 9, *et seq.*—the theory of the Chev. Ramsay examined, x. 10—the theory which attributes to God no prescience, investigated, x. 11, *et seq.*—freedom of an action, reconcilable with the prescience of it, x. 11, *et seq.*—incomprehensibility of the manner in which God knows future events, x. 13—fallacy of the argument, that prescience destroys contingency, x. 14—is not mere *influence*, x. 16—actions may be foreknown, and not thereby rendered necessary, x. 16—remarks of Dr. Samuel Clarke on, x. 17; of Bishop Copleston, x. 18; and of Curcellæus, x. 20—Archbishop King, theory of, stated, x. 22–24; and examined, x. 25, *et seq.*—in what the difficulties connected with this doctrine consist, x. 37—implies simple prescience, xi. 373—scripture views of the term, xi. 302, *et seq.*

*Forerunner*, in what respects Christ is said to be a, iv. 328

*Forgetfulness of God*, a crying sin of the Jews, ii. 399

*Forgiveness of sin*, mode of, denominated “the righteousness of God,” ii. 278; xi. 63–66—is alone capable of imparting happiness, ii. 324—constitutes a citizen of heaven, ii. 374—God’s purpose in, manifested in the face of Christ, iv. 139—prophetic description of a man forgiven, iv. 152—in harmony with the righteousness of the law, iv. 176—the know-

ledge of, a privilege of believers, iv. 289—is an act of God instantaneous and complete, v. 420—why the Pharisees were offended at this act of Christ, vi. 190—is essentially connected with the doctrine of atonement, ix. 293, *et seq.*—a divine act of Christ, x. 313—is not an act of mere prerogative on the part of God, xi. 8, *et seq.*; xii. 355—nor bestowed on account of the repentance in man, xi. 15, *et seq.*; xii. 355—is ascribed to the death of Christ, xi. 23—representation of, under the idea of the free remission of a debt, considered, xi. 60, 76—and yet a free act of divine mercy, xi. 62—though closely connected with an atonement, xi. 63; xii. 356—an act of mercy and of justice, xi. 65—a demonstration of the righteousness of God, xi. 66, *et seq.*—how connected with the sufferings of Christ, xi. 79—principles on which God can forgive sin, stated, xii. 353, *et seq.* See *Pardon, Justification*.

“*Form of God*,” the phrase examined, x. 336, *et seq.*

*Formality*, a pharisaic formalist farthest from the kingdom of God, ii. 270—religious formalists, how they pervert the doctrine of the longsuffering of God, iii. 367

*Forms of prayer*, the antiquity and propriety of, iii. 189; xii. 75—objections to the use of, considered, xii. 74—to reject them is absurd and unscriptural, xii. 75—the Lord’s prayer intended to be used as a form of devotion, xii. 76

*Formularies in the church*, comparative merits of, viii. 128—the necessity and importance of, x. 345. See *Creeds*.

*Fornication*, foully practised in all pagan countries, ix. 79—lax opinions of ancient philo-

- sophers on, ix. 79—intended to be prevented by the institution of marriage, xii. 131
- Forster*, Rev. Charles, B. D., his "Mahometanism unveiled; or, an Inquiry," &c., reviewed, vii. 359-391—general character of his work, vii. 360, 361, 391—the theory which he seeks to establish, vii. 361, *et seq.*—his parallel between Christianity and Mahometanism, vii. 361—accounts for the success of the false prophet, vii. 365—attributes it to the providence and ordination of God, vii. 367, *et seq.*—leading principle upon which his theory depends, vii. 369, 370—the unsoundness of his premises exhibited, vii. 371—and unjustness of his parallels, vii. 372—his argument from the permanency of Islamism, weak and exaggerated, vii. 373—his erroneous application of the term "Christian philosophy," vii. 374—his inconsistent and monstrous hypothesis, vii. 376—his character as a biblical critic, vii. 377—his erroneous view of the benefit of circumcision, vii. 378—his false criticism on St. Paul's allegory, vii. 379—and on the promises to Sarah and Hagar, vii. 380—his profane attempt to sanctify the religion of the false prophet, vii. 381—his approach to blasphemy in speaking of the Koran, vii. 382, 383—his notion that Mahometanism was a blessing to the nations, combated, vii. 384—his idea that Islamism benefited civil life, the arts, &c., examined, vii. 385—his sentiment that the religion of Mahomet acts beneficially, in preparing the way for the Gospel, proved erroneous, vii. 387-390
- Fossils*, why so few human skeletons are found in a fossil state, ix. 355
- Foundation of the church*, considered, iii. 286; vi. 197—how laid on the twelve Apostles, iii. 287; vi. 197—absurd notions of the Church of Rome on this subject, vi. 197
- Fountain*, that opened to the Jews, described, iii. 375—its efficacy pointed out, iii. 376—the period when it was opened, iii. 377—God the unfailing fountain of supplies, iv. 26
- Fox*, Charles James, is eulogized by Roscoe, for refusing to be an accomplice in a murder, vi. 395, 396—character of his negotiations with France, vi. 397
- Fragments*, why Christ was so careful of the, vi. 195
- France*, forms of government which have been adopted there, show the fallacy of human wisdom alone, in ameliorating the moral condition of man, ii. 487—progress of infidelity there, accounted for, iv. 249, 516—her pride and vanity abased, iv. 253—cause of the war with, considered, vi. 366—her ambition and encroachments, noticed, vi. 369—effects of the revolution in, vi. 371—conduct of the Sovereigns of Europe toward, vi. 372—character of the French, vi. 375—her notorious violation of the treaty of Amiens, vi. 377, 378—proposes to England to restrict the liberty of the press, vi. 382—her systematic hostility against Britain, vi. 391—testimony of Pitt and Fox, that no secure peace can be made between England and France, vi. 397—hypocritical character of her diplomacy, vi. 400, *et seq.*—the French revolution alluded to, xii. 162
- Rev. William, his "Discourses on the Person of Christ," quoted, x. 261-264
- Fraser*, Rev. Donald, his translation of Witsius's "Dissertations on the Apostles' Creed," reviewed, vii. 493-506—his

- erroneous views of evangelical Arminianism, vii. 501
- Free agent*, the question whether glorified spirits are such, considered, iii. 30—scriptural views of man as such, iv. 245—doctrine of divine influence, not opposed to, ix. 304. See *Agency*, *Moral agency*.
- Freedom of the will*, scriptural views of, iv. 245—import of the doctrine of the, xi. 300, *et seq.*
- Freedom*, spiritual, a privilege of the citizen of heaven, ii. 374
- French Church*, the, confession of, on the doctrines of election and predestination, xi. 441
- *revolution*, is approved of by William Roscoe, Esq., vi. 371—character and effects of the, vi. 371—subsequent conduct of the European states justified, vi. 372—horrors of the, traced to the true source, vi. 372—the leaders of, intended to revolutionize the world, vi. 373—their diplomatic hypocrisy, vi. 373
- Friendship of Christ*, noticed, iv. 451
- Fruit*, of the tree of life, why forbidden after the fall, iii. 69—fruits of the Spirit, defined, iii. 383
- Fruits of the Spirit*, not sufficient evidence of the fact of our adoption, xi. 264—these fruits described, iii. 383; xi. 265, *et seq.*
- "*Fulness of God*," meaning of the phrase, iv. 540
- Futurity*, prospects of, ii. 261—Gospel triumphs over gloomy apprehensions concerning, ii. 445—part of the revelation vouchsafed to man, iii. 334—the doctrine of a future state known to the ancient Jews, iii. 363—was especially revealed to Abraham, iii. 442, 443—vague notions of, entertained by systems of Paganism, ix. 67—a knowledge of, an attribute of Christ, x. 300
- G.
- Gabinus*, a Roman commander, deprives Hyrcanus, the Priest, of the government of Judea, vi. 131
- Gadarenes*, the destruction of their swine, vindicated, vi. 194
- Gaius*, to whom St. John's third Epistle was addressed, vi. 322
- Galatians*, design of the Epistle to the, iii. 56—what people they were, vi. 277—the argument pursued in the Epistle to the, alluded to, vi. 277
- Galen*, Claudius, his hymn of praise to the Creator, ix. 411
- Galiano*, Don A. A., his "Introductory Lecture in the University of London," reviewed, vii. 392–406
- Galilee*, Upper and Lower, where situated, vi. 176
- Galvanism*, an effect produced by the preaching of Mr. Grimshaw, attributed by Mr. Southey to, v. 439
- Gamaliel*, his character, vi. 243
- Gambling*, the obvious evils of, xii. 121
- Gambold*, Rev. John, the character of, v. 27—his account of the Rev. John and Charles Wesley, v. 27–30
- Gates*, of the church, described, iii. 286—of a city, the ancient place for transacting the public affairs, vi. 68—"gates of hell," meaning of the phrase, vi. 197
- Geddes*, Alexander, LL.D., his dangerous notions concerning the obligation of the Christian Sabbath, xii. 97
- Gemara*, the, described, vi. 126
- Genealogies*, Jewish, conjectures concerning, viii. 37
- General redemption*, contemplated in the atonement of Christ, iii. 416. See "*All Men*," *Calvinistic controversy*.
- Genesis*, the book of, the special object of the attack of infidelity, and why, vii. 352—truth of, corroborated by un-

- designed coincidences, vii. 353  
 —fabric of a patriarchal church, discoverable in, vii. 353  
 —genuineness of the book of, ix. 160—not a complete history of patriarchal theology, xi. 141
- Genevan Churches*, character of the music of, viii. 325
- Gennadius of Marseilles*, on baptism by sprinkling, xii. 270
- Gentiles*, union with, recognised in the old dispensation, ii. 338  
 —their day of visitation, iv. 6  
 —distinction between Jew and Gentile, not the act of God, iv. 63.—goodness of God toward the, iv. 66—misery of the Gentile world, noticed, iv. 68  
 —effects of the Gospel among the, iv. 72—a term often used to denote the Romans, vi. 205  
 —pay the first adoration to the Saviour, vi. 221—awful immorality of the, vi. 256—the calling of the, vi. 260—predestination of the, to church privileges, vi. 261—the election of the, considered, xi. 306, *et seq.*
- Geology*, science of, too imperfectly known to be the basis of any theological argument, vi. 26—protests against the antiquity claimed by some states, ix. 340—geological objections to the Mosaic date of creation, considered, ix. 341, *et seq.*; xii. 368—comparative infancy of the science, ix. 346  
 —the two rival sects of, ix. 346—testimony of, to the truth of the deluge of Noah, ix. 351, *et seq.*
- Georgia*, description of the colony of, v. 32
- German Divines*, awful dereliction from the faith of their fathers, vii. 173—their former orthodoxy, vii. 174—causes of their present defection, vii. 174, *et seq.*—their contempt for the Divines of the Reformation, vii. 176—consider the doctrines of religion, capable of philosophic demonstration, vii. 177, *et seq.*—the idea that human reason was to perfect Christianity, vii. 178—deplorable state of Christianity in Germany, vii. 179—effects of this upon the people, vii. 180  
 —how far the want of articles of faith, ecclesiastical control, and an obligatory Liturgy, ministered to this defection, vii. 181, *et seq.*—were defective in the spirit of piety, vii. 182—monitory condition of the church in Germany, vii. 184—the evil of unsanctified learning, illustrated, vii. 184—and of educating youth to the ministry as a profession, irrespective of true conversion, vii. 185
- Ghost*, derivation of the term, x. 359
- Gibbon*, Edward, Esq., on the notions of the Heathen concerning the ubiquity of God, ix. 502
- Gibson*, Bishop, his concern for the conversion of the negroes, vi. 427
- Gideon*, his comparative weakness as an instrument of God, iv. 217
- Gifts*, obtained by Christ on his ascension, described, iv. 82—of religious truth, connected with the gift of Christ, iv. 121—of the apostolic age, importance of, iv. 386—the great gift of God, considered, viii. 430—nature of the gift of miracles, ix. 181, *et seq.*
- Gill*, John, D.D., quoted, on Jewish proselyte baptism, xii. 246
- Gillies*, John, D.D., writes to Mr. Wesley on the subject of congregational singing, v. 207—his “Historical Collections,” noticed, v. 207—extracts from them, proving that sudden revivals of religion are not peculiar to Methodism, v. 515–532
- Gisborne*, Thomas, M.A., his

- "Testimony of Natural Theology," referred to, ix. 288—on the deluge of Noah, ix. 351; xii. 369—on the convulsions undergone by the globe attributable to the moral delinquency of man, x. 72
- "Given to Christ," meaning of the phrase, xi. 379, 385
- Gladiatorial combats*, a description of, ix. 76; xii. 314
- Gladness of the church*, source of the, iv. 43
- Glassius*, on the import of the word *Σωματικῶς*, x. 351
- Gleig*, on the unity of God, ix. 464
- Glory of Christ*, beheld by the Apostles during his humiliation, considered, ii. 436—seen in numerous divine acts, ii. 436—at his transfiguration, ii. 438—at his resurrection and ascension, ii. 438—displayed the grace and compassion of God, ii. 437
- *of God*, appropriated to ourselves in worship, iii. 146—how displayed in the conversion of the Heathen, iv. 317—ought constantly to be set before us, viii. 382
- Gnostics*, who they were, vi. 294—nature of the errors of the, vi. 296; viii. 20; x. 280, 343; xii. 20—the antiquity of this heresy, viii. 18—firmly opposed by the Apostles, viii. 20—a description of the theory of the, viii. 25, *et seq.*—opinion of, concerning angels, viii. 26—views of the, respecting Christ, viii. 27—to whom attributed, viii. 27—influence of, upon the Jews, viii. 28—denied the doctrine of the resurrection, viii. 40—their figurative view of it, viii. 40—effected great mischief in the church, viii. 47—denied the humanity of our Lord, viii. 49—declared that Jesus and the Christ were two persons, viii. 50—rejected the Divinity and eternal filiation of the Son of God, viii. 53—foundation of the doctrine of, viii. 54—held some tenets which are peculiar to Calvinism, xi. 416—denied the doctrine of the resurrection, xii. 20
- God*, the argument *a priori* in proof of the existence of, considered, i. 379—eminently displays himself in the dispensations of Providence, ii. 34—is to be acknowledged in all the transactions of the world, ii. 35—a remarkable interposition of, in the affairs of Europe, ii. 36, 37—in what way he has magnified man, ii. 66, *et seq.*—forgetfulness of, man's great crime, ii. 80—reasons for trust in God, ii. 87—is to be honoured in man, ii. 132—his care of man manifested in the material world, ii. 199; and in the works of Providence, ii. 200—his regard for nations not inconsistent with his attention to man individually, ii. 205—his goodness in the means of our salvation, ii. 212—his purposes in the work of creation, ii. 255—is especially to be found in retirement and meditation, ii. 265—power of, manifested in the Gospel, ii. 276—name of, exalted by the church, ii. 336—eminently present in his church, ii. 339—fellowship of the Christian with God, ii. 377—God himself the inheritance of the saints, ii. 378—pays regard to the conduct of his creatures, ii. 400—could not be known without a revelation, ii. 437—has revealed himself in the works of nature, ii. 438—grace of, how seen in Christ, ii. 438—awful consequences of no God being acknowledged, ii. 480—knowledge of, the foundation of morality, ii. 480—knowledge of, when lost, not regained without extraordinary aid, ii. 492—never acts without de-

sign iii. 2—meditation of, sweet to a Christian, iii. 141—nature of the worship of, defined, iii. 142—worship of, a source of joy, and why, iii. 145—when the heart is right with, iii. 149, 150—in what sense he is "*our Lord*," iii. 210—his presence, implied in the name Emmanuel, iii. 240—his special operations to save the world, iii. 277—counsels of, adverted to, iii. 299—wisdom of the works of, iii. 300—secret things belonging to, iii. 320—long suffering of, how displayed, iii. 364—why said to be a consuming fire, iii. 408—how his will is connected with the salvation of men, iii. 417—"God worketh in you," meaning of the phrase, iii. 447—in what respects he is the rest of the soul, iii. 449, *et seq.*—the chief good of the soul, iii. 451—our Almighty Protector, iii. 452—the ultimate end of the soul, iii. 452—the phrase "raised up out of his holy habitation," explained, iii. 472—his judicial visitation of men, noticed, iv. 10—the people of, described, iv. 17—a rock to the church, iv. 24—a fountain of supply, iv. 26—the Father of all mankind, iv. 62—has revealed his glory in Christ, iv. 133, *et seq.*—the absolute rule of, described, iv. 145—his incomprehensible nature, iv. 146—the adorable holiness of God, iv. 149—his power, iv. 164—philosophic views of, iv. 225—his majesty revealed to check thoughtlessness, iv. 227—how manifested in heaven as reconciled to man, iv. 321—called "a Judge" in his regal character, iv. 425—his spiritual nature, iv. 483—reasons why he ought to be worshipped, iv. 487—his right to rule his creatures, vi. 6—the eternity of, vi. 22—how He is

to be set before us, viii. 382, *et seq.*—as our Sovereign, is to be habitually remembered, viii. 386—duty of man to, viii. 486—immutability of, defined, viii. 487—the author of light, viii. 490—permits moral, and inflicts natural evil, viii. 491, *et seq.*—the scripture character of, ix. 283, 363, *et seq.*—the existence of, ix. 362, *et seq.*—scripture names of, ix. 363—creation, a work of, ix. 364—conduct of, to man, ix. 365—views of the nature of God, ix. 369—existence of, a truth assumed by the sacred writers, ix. 370—is not known by the exercise of reason, ix. 372—but by revelation, ix. 375—argument for the existence of, considered, ix. 388, *et seq.*—the intelligence of, demonstrated, ix. 393, *et seq.*—the unity of, considered, ix. 461; x. 135—his spirituality, ix. 470, *et seq.*—importance of the doctrine of the immateriality of God, ix. 472—on his eternity, ix. 486, *et seq.*—his omnipotence, ix. 494, *et seq.*—his omnipresence, ix. 501, *et seq.*—his omniscience, x. 3, *et seq.*—the foreknowledge of, considered, x. 8, *et seq.*—his immutability, x. 40—his knowledge, x. 45—his liberty, x. 48—his wisdom, x. 49—his goodness, x. 58, *et seq.*—blasphemy in making God the author of evil, x. 82—his holiness, x. 94, *et seq.*—the plural terms of, considered, x. 136, *et seq.*—did manifest himself to men, distinct from the Son, x. 171—a title applied to Christ, x. 196, *et seq.*—on the application of the term to the creature, x. 199—on the high import of the term, x. 199—the existence of wrath in, denied by the Socinian, considered, xi. 40, *et seq.*—"God," a title of Christ, considered, x. 196, *et seq.*—its great

- importance, x. 197—involves the notion of absolute divinity, x. 197—notions of Arianism respecting, examined and refuted, x. 200—scripture testimonies of, x. 202—import of the name Emmanuel, x. 203—"the Lord their God," x. 204—"the Word of God," x. 204—"Great God and our Saviour," x. 208—"the true God," x. 213—"God blessed for ever," x. 214, *et seq.*—the high authority of this title, alluded to, x. 215—the high value of these titles, x. 218—on the title "Son of God," x. 220, *et seq.*
- Gods of the Heathen*, immoral character of the, ix. 83
- Godwyn*, Rev. Morgan, his work, "The Negro's and Indian's Advocate suing for their Admission into the Church," &c., noticed, ii. 99, 129
- Goel*, import of the name, as applied to the Most High, x. 60—meaning of the term, xii. 117
- Golden age*, alluded to by heathen writers, ix. 33
- Gomarus*, a violent opposer of Arminius, vii. 486, 489—his character as a theological disputant, vii. 489—his intolerance, vii. 490—on the idea of conditional prescience, x. 9
- Gomorrhah*, destruction of, alluded to by the ancients, vi. 67
- Good works*, doctrine of, the merit of, when introduced into the Church of Rome, vii. 456
- Good*, John Mason, F.R.S., his description of life, quoted, vi. 28
- Goodness of God*, suggests no way of pardon for the guilty independent of an atonement, ii. 322—the common plea of the careless sinner, iii. 62—exhibited in the controlling influence of the Gospel, iii. 237—no hope for the sinner in contemplating the, iii. 357—toward the Gentiles, noticed, iv. 66—defined, x. 58—Scripture views of, x. 58—pagan views of, noticed, x. 58—various illustrations of, x. 59, *et seq.*—implied in the names of God, x. 59, *et seq.*—in the beneficial contrivances shown in his works, x. 62—in the use of predatory and venomous animals, x. 63—in the happiness of the brute creation, x. 65—in the works of nature, x. 74—in the waters of the deluge, x. 75—in the human body, x. 77—how compatible with the existence of evil, x. 81, *et seq.*
- Goodwin*, John, M.A., quoted on the doctrine of imputed righteousness, xi. 180, 182, *et seq.*, 191—the excellency of his treatise on justification, noticed, xi. 185—on the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin being destructive of the Calvinian and Antinomian idea of the imputed righteousness of Christ, xi. 198, *et seq.*—on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 206—on the doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation, irreconcilable with the grace of God, xi. 350—his remarks on the doctrines of Calvinism, xi. 421
- Gospel of Christ*, is that only on which the hope of a fallen world can rest, i. 256—a system of power, ii. 14—the testimony of experience to the ultimate success of the Gospel, ii. 16—prophecy confirms the certainty of its prosperity, ii. 18—extension of it promoted by national prosperity and peace, ii. 32—the excellency of, ii. 260, 280—the divinity of the Author of the Gospel, noticed, ii. 272—contrasted with the gospel of Socinianism, ii. 273—Paul's view of the effect of the Gospel, ii. 274—general effects of, ii. 275—experimental blessings of, ii. 276—in what respects it is the power of God, ii. 277, *et seq.*—demands devout acknowledgment, ii. 280—claims un-



shrinking avowal, ii. 281—necessity of the Gospel system, ii. 281—expects grateful and practical acceptance, ii. 282—why termed “a rod of power,” ii. 308—in what the strength of the Gospel consists, ii. 309—why it is called the wisdom of God, ii. 320—affords all needful instruction, ii. 320—is a divine contrivance to pardon the guilty, ii. 321—nothing capriciously mysterious in, ii. 328—triumphs of, considered, ii. 442—authority with which it is clothed, ii. 450—is fully adapted to the state of man, ii. 451; iii. 49—how the ark of the testimony was a type of, ii. 471—is emphatically law, ii. 472—fully administered only by men experiencing its truth and power, ii. 474—success in preaching, not promised to the unconverted man, ii. 474—is the only remedy for the evils of idolatry, ii. 490—its saving effects, ii. 491—mysterious progress of, among the Heathen, iii. 196—“Gospel of the kingdom” import of the phrase, iii. 236—beneficial effects of the controlling influence of, iii. 237—obstacles it met with, iii. 55—perpetuity of, considered, iii. 341—evidence of the truth of, noticed, iii. 342—experience of, a proof of its stability, iii. 342—remedial character of, iii. 343—a glorifying dispensation, iii. 344—God’s plan of saving the world, iii. 345—the immutability of, iii. 349—why termed “the everlasting righteousness,” iii. 390—emphatically termed “the truth,” iii. 410—merciful character of, noticed, iii. 498—progress of, in the earth, considered, iii. 499–503—why termed “the everlasting Gospel,” iv. 156—adapted to all nations and men, iv. 162—universal philanthropy of, iv. 163—reciprocal uses of, and the law, iv. 169—founded on

the eternity of the law, iv. 171—implies the guilt of man, iv. 173—how far the object of, is the re-establishment of the law, iv. 173—why compared to light, iv. 212—in what respect it is the most terrible dispensation of God, viii. 548—general harmony of the system of, viii. 549—attractive character of, viii. 550—its remedial properties, alluded to, x. 465—the duty of believing the, considered, xi. 294—import of the term, xii. 304

*Gospels*, why the writings of the Evangelists were so called, vi. 170—the publication of, an instance of divine wisdom, vi. 172—distinguishing peculiarity of each, vi. 172—language in which they were written, vi. 172—original manuscripts of, vi. 172; xii. 348—on the credibility of the, ix. 164; xii. 349. See *Scriptures*.

*Gotteschale*, a Monk, the apologist of Augustine, xi. 417

*Gouge*, William, D.D., quoted, on the duties of children to parents, xii. 140

*Government*, form of, unable to remedy the evils of idolatry, ii. 487—duty of, to provide religious instruction for its subjects, vi. 425—object of human government, stated, viii. 408—effects of Christianity upon, ix. 323—how far a Christian government may interfere in the manner in which the rights of conscience are exercised, xii. 124—and in its recognition of infidel tenets, xii. 126—in what respects it ought to take cognisance of marriage, xii. 132—is an ordinance of God, xii. 150—specific character of the most ancient government, xii. 151—duty of subjects in regard to the government under which they live, xii. 151—Locke and Paley’s idea of a “social compact” originating government, proved

- to be absurd, xii. 152—the ground of a subject's obligation, considered, xii. 152—the most just principles of government not to be pleaded in favour of oppression and wrong, xii. 153—how far it is consistent with submission to remedy the evils of government, xii. 156—when resistance to supreme power is consistent with the subject's duty, xii. 158
- Government of God*, uncompromising principles of the, ii. 293—retributive character of, ii. 380—all political events bear upon the interests of religion, ii. 464—secrets of the, alluded to, iii. 325—his moral government of the world, how displayed in Christ, iv. 137—subjects of the, iv. 241—"moral government," meaning of the phrase, iv. 241—is sovereign and uncontrolled, iv. 244—does not interfere with human liberty, iv. 245—is mediatorial, iv. 246—two kinds of moral government, iv. 284—general object of the, viii. 408—defined, viii. 486; ix. 367—over moral agents, noticed, ix. 11—his mode of government does not sufficiently declare his will to man, ix. 12—in what sense it is a rigorous administration, ix. 15—character of, toward man, ix. 287
- Governors*, why Peter specially enjoined obedience to, vi. 319
- Grace*, dispensations of, revealed to meditation, ii. 258—displayed in the revelation which God has given to man, ii. 437—of God, how displayed in Jesus Christ, ii. 438—shown in the standing ministry of the word, ii. 439—growth in, promised, ii. 458—richness and freedom of, manifested towards Paul, iii. 42—power of, displayed in Paul's conversion, iii. 43—what, imparted to infants at baptism, iii. 80—the kingdom of, described, iii. 191—in what respects it is lost to a condemned soul, iii. 221—and law, closely connected, iv. 171—the administration of, is the re-establishment of the law, iv. 173—is in every part consistent with the law, iv. 174—of God, impugned by the doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation, xi. 350—degrees in which it is imparted to man, considered, xi. 396, *et seq.*—the Calvinistic notion of the irresistibility of grace, examined, xi. 493
- Grant*, Robert E., M.D., his "Essay on the Study of the Animal Kingdom," reviewed, vii. 392-406
- Γραφή*, explained, vii. 497
- Gratitude*, law of, in the exercise of charity, noticed, ii. 348—a principle of acceptable worship, iii. 209—an essential principle of devotion, iv. 494—for national mercies, necessary, iv. 522—for family benefits, reasonable, iv. 523—for blessings of personal experience, iv. 524—for gifts granted to the church, iv. 527-529
- Grave*, deliverance of the Christian from the, iii. 135—victory over, how achieved, iii. 434
- Graves*, Richard, D.D., on the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity to the scheme of redemption, x. 128
- Gravitation*, amazing power of, x. 52
- Gray*, Robert, D.D., his "Connexion of Sacred and Heathen Literature," quoted, x. 415
- Great Britain*, her day of visitation, iv. 6—condition of, during the war, iv. 240—graciously protected, iv. 250
- Grecian games*, allusion of St. Paul to them, illustrated, vi. 269, 291, 305
- Greek article*, Bishop Middleton on the doctrine of the, &c., quoted, x. 205—criticism on the absence of the, considered, x. 205, 209

- Greek Church*, dissenters from, at Krestzi, described, viii. 195—the Russian Quakers, viii. 196—the Milkites, or spiritual Christians, viii. 196, *et seq.*—account of an old Priest of, viii. 201
- Gregorian chant*, the, a description of, viii. 322
- Gregory*, Nazianzen, his catalogue of the books of Scripture, ix. 185
- , Olinthus, LL.D., on mysteries, in his “Evidences of Revelation,” referred to, vii. 61; ix. 333—his refutation of Hume on miracles, ix. 116—on the difficulties of revelation, ix. 327—on the relation between cause and effect, ix. 382—on the Scriptures requiring a belief of things incomprehensible to reason, xii. 367
- Grenville*, Lord, a speech of, in the House of Lords, quoted, vi. 378
- Gretton*, M., his “Review of the Argument *à priori*,” quoted, ix. 456
- Grimshaw*, Rev. William, an effect of his preaching attributed by Southey to galvanism, v. 439
- Grinfield*, Rev. E. W., M.A., his “Vindiciæ Analogicæ, or a Letter to Rev. Edward Copleston, D.D., on his Inquiry,” &c., reviewed, vii. 291—on passions attributed in Scripture to God, x. 33
- “*Groans of the creature*,” the phrase explained, iii. 136
- Grotius*, Hugo, his allusion to traditionary records respecting the deluge, ix. 50—quoted, on the ground of moral obligation, ix. 93—on the impulsive cause of the death of Christ, xi. 32;—and its vicarious character, xi. 34—on Christ being our propitiatory, or mercy-seat, xi. 40—on the reconciliation effected by the Gospel, xi. 46—on the term “redemption,” xi. 51—on the contrast between Moses and Christ in the character of Redeemer, xi. 54—on the dignity of the sacrifice of Christ, xi. 68—on the doctrine of satisfaction, xi. 72—and on the sacrifice of Abel, xi. 120
- Groves*, why God was not to be worshipped in, vi. 99
- Gualterus*, Rhodolphus, quoted, on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 210
- Guyse*, John, D.D., on the term “Spirit of Holiness,” applied to the divine nature of Christ, x. 248

## H.

- Habakkuk*, chronological order and character of his prophecy, vi. 167
- Hades*, meaning of the phrase, viii. 288, *et seq.*—the two regions of, defined, viii. 290
- Haggai*, his prediction respecting the temple, considered, vi. 121—chronological order of his prophecy, vi. 168—its peculiar character, vi. 168
- Hagiographa*, what; were among the books collected by Ezra, vi. 119
- Hails*, W. A., his “Remarks on Volney’s Ruins,” reviewed, viii. 12–17
- Hales*, William, D.D., on the dividing of the Red Sea, ix. 206—on the enchantments of Egypt, ix. 217—on the dispersion of the Jews, ix. 259; xii. 327—on the capacity of the ark of Noah, ix. 353; xii. 369—on the prophecy of Micah, concerning Christ, x. 233
- Hall*, Bishop, on the doctrine of assurance, v. 179, 396, 401—his “Meditations on the Love of Christ,” quoted, v. 401—on Jacob’s dream, vi. 69—on the title, “Son of God,” applied to Christ, x. 227
- , Rev. Robert, his sentiments concerning the doc-

- trine of the eternal Sonship of Christ, i. 239
- Hallett*, Joseph, on the divine origin of sacrifice, xi. 164
- Ham*, prophetic malediction concerning, by Noah, how fulfilled, vi. 58
- Hamilton*, Bishop, his "Attempt to prove the Existence of a supreme unoriginated Being," mentioned, i. 379
- , Rev. George, M. A., his "Tracts on some of the leading errors of the Church of Rome," reviewed, vii. 441–453
- Hammond*, Henry, D.D., his fault as a commentator, viii. 18—on the term "Spirit of Holiness," applied to the divine nature of Christ, x. 248
- Hampson*, Rev. John, his "Life of Wesley," noticed, v. 475 (n)—his contrast between Wesley and Whitefield, v. 475—character of his biography of Mr. Wesley, vii. 408—Mr. Southey's opinion of him as a biographer, vii. 408
- Hand*, stretching out of the, towards God, what, iv. 498
- Happiness*, of the good contrasted with the misery of the wicked in a future state, ii. 261—numerous schemes to procure it among men, noticed, ii. 324—lost by man at the fall, iii. 351—produced only by the religion of Christ, iii. 493—closely connected with justification by faith, iii. 494—temporal happiness dependent on God, iv. 25—alleged happiness of the Heathen considered, iv. 210—nature of that, communicated by the Gospel, iv. 215—consists in a right state of the heart, iv. 497—in the habit of prayer, iv. 498—in personal reformation, iv. 499—and in the diffusion of divine truth, iv. 518—contemplated in man, by his Maker, x. 59
- Hardening the heart*, attributed to the Most High, explained, xi. 391
- Hare*, Rev. Edward, on the necessity of revelation, to ascertain the existence of God, ix. 375—and on the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's, righteousness, xi. 198
- Harmonies of the Evangelists*, alluded to, vi. 219; ix. 192
- Harvard*, Rev. W. M., his "Narrative of the Establishment, &c., of the Ceylon Mission," reviewed, vii. 326–335—character of the work, vii. 332—his account of the Buddhism and Kappooism of Ceylon, vii. 334
- Harwood*, Edward, D.D., on the credibility of Gospel history, ix. 164, *et seq.*—on the character of the sacred writers, ix. 196—and on the pre-existence of Christ, x. 160
- Hate*, a Hebraism, meaning of the term, vi. 203—hatred, encouraged among the ancients, ix. 78; xii. 315
- Hawkesbury*, Lord, his constitutional reply to a French Minister respecting the liberty of the press, vi. 381
- Haymo*, Bishop of Halberstadt, quoted, on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 208
- Heart of man*, how it is searched by the Gospel, ii. 309—when said to be at rest, ii. 325—sins of, equally punished with others, ii. 401—when it may be said to be right with God, iii. 149; with Christ, iii. 151; with the church, iii. 153; and with itself, iii. 154—preparedness of the, necessary to happiness, iv. 497; in what it consists, iv. 497—the hardening of the, attributed to God, explained, xi. 391
- Heathen*, mournful state of the heathen world, i. 137; ii. 3; iii. 201—the question respecting the actual safety of the Heathen considered, i. 138; ii. 4; xi. 491—the number of the Heathen in a perilous condi-

tion, i. 139—charity to the Heathen is charity begun at home, i. 145—are eminently prepared by the Almighty to receive the Gospel, i. 146—Rev. W. Ward's description of Heathenism, i. 331—appalling number of the Heathen, ii. 6—the demoralizing influence of Heathenism, ii. 7—destructive in its tendency, ii. 8—schemes of men for the conversion of the Heathen, considered, ii. 10, 11—ultimate success of means employed, ii. 14—are not destitute of all knowledge of God, ii. 197; iv. 156—views of God entertained by, ii. 197; iv. 156—had nothing on which to invite meditation, ii. 254—affords no hope of pardon for the guilty, ii. 322—their notion of a God, ii. 336—made no provision for the poor, ii. 444—had no law for the protection of slaves, ii. 444—no forgiveness or charity in the religion of, ii. 444—conversion of, prayed for by the Jews, ii. 470—nature of the heaven of Heathenism, ii. 484—salvability of the, considered, ii. 485; v. 232—mysterious progress of the Gospel among the, iii. 196—sanguinary rites of, iii. 237—not left without proof of the mercy of God, iii. 457—present state of the, considered, iii. 465—468—human sacrifices prevalent among the, iii. 494—ignorant of their sinful state, iv. 157—know nothing of acceptance and pardon, through a true Mediator, iv. 158—principle of sacrifice, recognised by them, what, iv. 158—are without the fear of God, iv. 164—effects of the Gospel among, iv. 166—the awful ignorance of, iv. 209; ix. 62, *et seq.*—alleged happiness of, considered, iv. 210—superstition of the, iv. 211—conversion of, how effected, iv.

317—deplorable moral condition of the, vi. 195—spiritual wretchedness of, vi. 342—religious truth acknowledged by, derived from revelation, ix. 33—the wisest of the, acknowledged the necessity of instruction, ix. 61—state of morals amongst, ix. 75; *et seq.* xii. 314,—the religion of, encourages all kinds of wickedness, ix. 81—religious systems of, noticed, ix. 82—the immoral character of the gods of, ix. 83—testimonies of the, to the truth of Gospel history, ix. 167, *et seq.*—effects of Christianity on the, ix. 323—their vague conceptions of a creation, ix. 377—confused notions of, concerning the ubiquity of God, ix. 502—Baxter on the case of the, xi. 448—the salvability and eternal state of, considered, xi. 491

*Heathen miracles*, pretended, alluded to, ix. 232

*Heaven*, the city of the Christian, ii. 373—of Heathenism, described, ii. 484—an eternal and unchangeable state, iii. 30—secured to the Christian, as Canaan was to the Israelites, iii. 31—will be various in its rewards, iii. 33—a difference in the degrees of the rewards in heaven, iii. 33—why termed the paradise of God, iii. 73—described as a place, iii. 105—of glorious vision, iii. 106—and of perfect security, iii. 109 a place of splendour, iii. 157—of purity, iii. 157—of permanent felicity, iii. 158—and of knowledge, iii. 159—in what a meetness for, consists, iii. 160—in what respects it is lost to a condemned soul, iii. 222—greater part of the church there, iii. 283—contrast between the heavenly and temporal Jerusalem, iii. 288—why termed “the tabernacle of God,” iv. 14, *et seq.*—

- the inhabitants of, described, iv. 17—the happiness of, iv. 19—the phrase “within the veil,” illustrated, iv. 321, *et seq.*—objects laid up in heaven, iv. 321, *et seq.*—character of the inhabitants of, iv. 329—the perfection of, iv. 427—in what the happiness of, is found, vi. 343—nature of, defined, viii. 445—the immediate reception of the soul into blessedness at death, xii. 13
- Heavenly mindedness*, manifested in St. Paul, iii. 230
- Hebrew*, the, when the language ceased to be vernacular, vi. 124
- *children*, object contemplated in the deliverance of the three, viii. 482—moral results of the event on the nation, ix. 55.
- *poetry*, character of, vi. 133—Bishop Jebb's remarks upon, vi. 134—the figurative and bold style of, vi. 134—illustrations of, vi. 135
- *Scriptures*, punctilious exactness with which copies are made by Jewish scribes, viii. 208, *et seq.*—rules observed in transcribing, viii. 209
- Hebrews*, Epistle to the, the Leviticus of the New Testament, iv. 275—character of those to whom it was written, vi. 306—its design, vi. 306—illustrates the ceremonial law, vi. 307—exhibits the great superiority of Christ over angels, Moses and Aaron, vi. 311—the whole argument of, reviewed, xi. 109
- Heidelberg Catechism*, on the subject of sacraments, xii. 218
- Heir*, how the term is applicable to the Christian, iii. 160
- Hell*, a place of darkness and horror, iii. 111—the triumph and overthrow of, iv. 116—in prophetic language implies “the grave,” vi. 139—Mr. Moore's observations on the doctrine of Christ's descent into, examined, vii. 437—Mr. Watson's observations on ditto, viii. 286–319—meaning of the term, viii. 288, *et seq.*, 434—nature of, defined, viii. 445—misery of, increased, by an accession to the number of the lost, viii. 446
- Hellenistic Jews*, described, vi. 124—injurious to St. Paul at Corinth, vi. 273—the corruptions of their system, vi. 294—adopted the use of the term “Logos,” x. 269
- Helmet*, the hope of salvation, described, 436
- Henderson*, Rev. Dr. E., his “Biblical Researches and Travels in Russia,” reviewed, viii. 191–214—establishes an Auxiliary Bible Society at Novogorod, viii. 194—his reception by the Clergy of Orel, described, viii. 200; and at Karkof, viii. 202; visits the catacombs of Kief, viii. 203—his description of a Jewish Scribe, viii. 208, *et seq.*
- Henry*, Matthew, his “Method for Prayer,” noticed, i. 32—on the evil of immoderate attachment to, i. 32
- Heracitus*, denied the soul's immortality, ix. 72; xii. 313
- Herbert*, Lord, his five articles of religion, ix. 326
- Heresy*, the term, how used by the Fathers, viii. 19—and by Josephus, viii. 19—nature of those which relate to the doctrine of the Trinity, x. 146
- Hermas*, (Pastor,) on the term “Spirit of holiness,” applied to the divine nature of Christ, x. 248
- Herod the Great*, his massacre of the infants, iii. 75; vi. 131—the last independent Sovereign of Judea, vi. 131—his sanguinary and suspicious character, vi. 131—why Pilate sent Christ to him, vi. 212—silence of Christ during the interrogatories of, vi. 236
- Herodians*, who they were, vi. 190

- Heroism*, the greatest, displayed by the Christian Missionary, iii. 25
- Hervey*, Rev. James, member of the first Methodist society, v. 12, 16—republishing of his "Eleven Letters," after his death, and contrary to his dying injunction, deprecated, v. 214—the prejudice excited by them, v. 215—his views of justification, xi. 188
- Hey*, Dr., his refutation of "Hume on Miracles," ix. 108
- Hierocles*, his testimony to the truth of the Gospel history, ix. 170; xii. 342
- Hieroglyphics*, history of the use of, viii. 159, *et seq.*—fate of the, viii. 160—opinion of Clement of Alexandria, on, viii. 161; and of Bishop Warburton, viii. 161—the phonetic and demotic character, noticed, viii. 162, *et seq.*—the Rosetta stone, history of, viii. 163, *et seq.*—success of researches in, viii. 166, *et seq.*—practical results of the deciphering of, viii. 175, *et seq.*—have proved the genuineness of Scripture, viii. 177
- High Priest*, incarnation of the Son of God, a qualification for the office of, ii. 434
- Hilarion*, Presbyter of Berestof, an account of, viii. 206
- Hilary*, St., on the Hebrew appellation of the Most High, ix. 489—on Christ being the Jehovah of the Old Testament, x. 185
- Hill*, George, D.D., on the title, "Son of God," implying divinity, x. 245—why the term "Logos" was occasionally used by St. John, x. 280, *et seq.*—on the attributes of Christ, x. 301—on the union of the two natures in the person of Christ, x. 353, *et seq.*—on the opinions of the semi-Pelagians, on the effects of the fall of man, x. 434—on the infliction of the punishment due to the guilty upon the innocent, xi. 83—on the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, xi. 256—on the character of the divine prescience, xi. 473—remarks on this statement, xi. 475—on the rigid administration of discipline in the primitive church, xii. 210—on the views of Calvin and the Reformed Church concerning the eucharist, xii. 293
- Hill*, Rev. Rowland, his coarse scurrility and buffoonery, as a controvertist, v. 240—Mr. Wesley's reply to, noticed, v. 241
- Hindoos*, traditions among, concerning the creation, vi. 49—the fall of man, ix. 48; x. 415—and the flood, ix. 50—the gross ignorance of the, ix. 63—their doctrine of absorption, noticed, ix. 70—infanticide practised among the, ix. 77; xii. 315—deceit, a character of the, ix. 80; xii. 316—the modern idolatry of the, characterized, xii. 312—their views of a Supreme Being, xii. 312—and confused notions of a divine providence, xii. 313
- History*, known to a considerable extent by the believer in revelation, iii. 51—of the church, mystery of, iv. 231
- Hobbes*, Thomas, the infidel, moral character of, ix. 312—his opinion concerning the Deity, ix. 326—his theory respecting cause and effect, ix. 380
- Holden*, Rev. George, M.A., "The Christian Sabbath," &c., reviewed, viii. 133–158—importance of the subject, viii. 133—on the sanctity of a seventh day, viii. 140—refutes the crude and dangerous positions of Paley, viii. 142, *et seq.*; xii. 89, *et seq.*—his views on the performance of charitable exercises on the Sabbath, examined, viii. 154, 155—of works of necessity, and Sabbath recreations, viii. 156—

- on the pre-existence of Christ, x. 156—on the children of Israel tempting Christ in the wilderness, x. 182—on Granville Sharp's "Law of Criticism," x. 209—on the title, "Son of God," applied to Christ, x. 227—on "the wisdom of God," x. 230—on Christ, a Son over his own house, x. 252—on the omnipresence of Christ, x. 294—on the passage, "that the Son did not know the time of the day of judgment," x. 300—on the doxologies of Scripture, x. 328—on the Mosaic account of the fall, referred to, x. 403—on the change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week, xii. 87  
*"Holiest of all,"* the, typical character of, iv. 170  
*Holiness*, is promoted by meditation, ii. 264—beauty of, described, ii. 314—among nations, ii. 314—in the church, ii. 315—the common character of the Christian, ii. 378—a maturity of, to be enjoyed in life, iii. 11—the great end of the knowledge of Christ, iii. 52—how far man resembles God, in, iii. 293—the extent and possibility of, taught by Christ, iv. 191—powerfully inculcated in the Epistle to the Romans, vi. 263—defined, x. 94, 397—close connexion with the fear of God, xii. 52. See *Sanctification*.  
 — *of God*, declared, ii. 337—in what it consists, iii. 293; xi. 6—no mercy expected from a contemplation of the, iii. 355—illustrated by the death of Christ, iii. 359—the phrase, "to anoint the most Holy," explained, iii. 391—the adorable holiness of God described, iv. 149—Christ, the image of, iv. 311—should be in constant remembrance, viii. 385—defined, x. 94—manifested in the constitution of man, x. 95—in the Gospel of Christ, x. 95—scripture character of the, x. 96—two great branches of, x. 97—redemption harmonizes with the, xi. 5. See *Justice of God, truth of God*.  
*Holland*, Lord, a speech of, in the House of Lords, noticed, vi. 503  
*Holy One of Israel*, an important title of Christ, x. 218  
 — *Ones*, explicitly limited to three, x. 141  
 — *Spirit*, direct witness of, noticed, i. 372-374; xi. 253, *et seq.*—important work of, i. 415—why He is designated a "good Spirit," i. 583—gives energy to the Gospel preached, ii. 15—without Him, the Gospel of Christ is a dead letter, ii. 79—necessary to the comprehension of the Scriptures, ii. 210—two grand offices of the, ii. 212—philosophical views of the work of, ii. 213—his permanent effects upon Stephen, ii. 419—signification of the term "Eternal Spirit," in Heb. ix. 14, iii. 116—secret influences of, on the heart, iii. 127—first fruits of, defined, iii. 139—extraordinary gifts of, described, iii. 380—ordinary operations of the, iii. 381-384—the two operations not to be confounded, iii. 382—offices of Comforter and Sanctifier, defined, iii. 383—the fruits of, specified, iii. 383—directed the Apostles to the field of labour, iii. 460—intimately connected with the religion of Christ, iii. 495—gift of the Spirit, what implied in, iii. 496—the great gift imparted on the ascension of Christ, iv. 82—important operations of, iv. 83, 84—his special influences, iv. 84—when termed a "Spirit of bondage," iv. 290—and "Spirit of adoption," iv. 291—the witness of, illustrated, iv. 292; xi. 260—the subject of his testimony, iv.



- 293—the only competent witness of our adoption, iv. 293—the gift of, a consequence of the priesthood of Christ, iv. 325—his great work in the redemption of the world, iv. 326—why termed “a baptism of fire,” iv. 327—work of, on the heart, iv. 411—doctrine of divine influence, considered, iv. 411–415; vi. 263—vouchsafed in different periods and degrees, v. 90—bears witness to man’s justified state, vi. 259—mysterious nature of the work of, vi. 350—blasphemy against, a specific crime, vii. 257—his office in the work of conversion, viii. 282—personality of, a doctrine of revelation, viii. 464—the benevolence of the, noticed, viii. 465—his work in the operations of nature, considered, viii. 466—his work in the church, viii. 467; and in the religious experience of individuals, viii. 470—his work of Comforter, described, viii. 473—scripture doctrine of the influence of, stated and defended, ix. 302, *et seq.*—outline of the scripture testimony to, x. 145—the promise of, a divine act of Christ, x. 313—personality and deity of, x. 359, *et seq.*—manner of the being of the, x. 359—scripture testimony to the procession of, x. 360—work of creation, attributed to, x. 363—absurdity in viewing him merely as an attribute, x. 372—the ordinary work of, stated, x. 376—his gracious work on the heart, described, x. 492—benefit of his influences, a fruit of the atonement, xi. 170—process of, in the work of conviction, xi. 172. See *Witness of the Spirit*.
- Homer*, a quotation from the “*Odyssey*” of, on the term “*hades*,” viii. 289—the notion of Providence, acknowledged in the “*Iliad*,” ix. 66—and an allusion to the fall of the angels, x. 414
- Homicide*, in what the essence of the crime of, consists, x. 389—how treated under the Mosaic law, xii. 117
- Homilies of the Church of England*, quoted, on the doctrine of justification by faith alone, xi. 220—on the personal and appropriating character of faith, xi. 258
- Honour*, meaning of the term, xii. 137—that which is due from children to parents, defined, xii. 137
- Hooker*, Rev. Richard, on the term “education,” ii. 46—his expression respecting his dissolution, noticed, iii. 9—his testimony concerning the witness of the Spirit, v. 401; viii. 260; xi. 269—his sermon, “on Jude,” quoted, v. 402; xi. 269—on the manner in which good men die, v. 412—on the doctrine of justification, xi. 226—his sermon on “the certainty of faith,” quoted, xi. 269
- Hooper*, Bishop, the martyr, his testimony in favour of the doctrine of assurance, v. 400; viii. 260; xi. 269
- Hope*, a pleasure peculiar to man, ii. 70—glorious prospects of the Christian’s hope, ii. 350—motive to benevolence addressed to, ii. 355—utterly unknown in the systems of idolatry, ii. 485—in God confirmed, by exercise of divine worship, iii. 147—“prisoners of hope,” meaning of the phrase, iii. 179—blessedness of that of the Christian, iii. 180—in what respects it is lost to a condemned soul, iii. 223—importance and foundation of the Christian’s hope, iv. 319—in what respects an anchor of the soul, iv. 320—value of, in the armoury of the Christian, iv. 436

- Hopkey*, Miss, the affair concerning, stated, v. 37-43
- Horace*, alludes to the fallen state of man, x. 414
- Horne*, Bishop, his opinion of the Psalms of David, vi. 163—*and on the import of Joel's prophecy*, x. 322
- Horne*, Rev. T. H., his definition of a "miracle," ix. 101—*on the integrity and uncorrupted state of the Scriptures*, ix. 190, *et seq.*—*on the collateral evidence of the truth of Scripture*, ix. 319—*his collection of the supposed contradictions of Scripture*, noticed, ix. 331
- Horneck*, Anthony, D.D., his testimony concerning supernatural appearances, v. 499
- Horses*, why the use of, was forbidden to the Jews, iii. 173; vi. 205
- Horsley*, Bishop, on the doctrine of assurance, v. 178, 396—*on the doctrine of the Trinity*, vi. 21—*on the term "hell,"* viii. 291, 296—*on the transmission of the true religion*, ix. 40—*on the expectation of a Deliverer*, ix. 51—*his account of the Sibylline verses*, noticed, ix. 51—*on the difficulties connected with the doctrine of the Trinity*, x. 134—*on Christ being the Jehovah of the Old Testament*, x. 174—*on the Messenger of the Covenant*, x. 175—*on Christ, as the Lord of the temple*, x. 175, *et seq.*—*on the public entry of Christ into Jerusalem*, x. 176—*on the inapplicability of Psalm xlv. to Solomon*, x. 211—*on the two natures of Christ*, x. 251—*on Priestley's attempts to evade the force of Stephen's prayer*, x. 319—*on the import of the 97th Psalm*, x. 324—*his observations on the theory, that the history of the fall is partly literal and allegorical*, x. 415, *et seq.*—*on the personal and appropriating character of faith*, xi. 258—*on the gift of the keys*, xii. 207
- Hosea*, chronological order of his prophecy, vi. 166
- House of God*, moral consequences resulting from the erection of, ii. 413—*calls into exercise the zeal and liberality of good men*, ii. 414
- Houses*, baptism of, or households, considered, xii. 258
- Howard*, John, his philanthropy, noticed, iii. 204
- Howe*, Rev. John, M.A., on the argument for the existence of God, ix. 388, *et seq.*—*on the intelligence of the divine Being*, ix. 401—*his demonstration of the infinite perfections of God*, ix. 403, *et seq.*—*on the unity of God*, ix. 464—*on the omnipotence of God*, ix. 499—*on the wisdom of God in the scheme of redemption*, x. 56—*on the holiness of God*, x. 97—*on the justice of God*, x. 99—*on the all-sufficiency of God*, x. 107—*on the word "person,"* x. 112—*on the unity of the three Persons in the Godhead*, x. 114—*on the image of God*, x. 388—*on the doctrine of original sin*, x. 484
- Hull*, state of Methodist society there when Mr. Watson was appointed to labour in it, i. 169—*opening of a new chapel in that town*, i. 170—*the leading features and success of Mr. Watson's ministry while there*, i. 171, 172—*Mr. Watson prepares a Report for the Auxiliary Missionary Society for the Hull District*, i. 189—*false alarm during the proceedings of this Meeting*, i. 191—*general character of the Methodist societies in that place*, vii. 129
- Human body*, why it is said to be vile, ii. 386—*is the seat of sin*, ii. 386—*the labour required for its support*, noticed, ii. 386—*is a clog to devotion*, ii. 387—*will be subject to death*,

- ii. 387—the doctrine of its resurrection, stated, ii. 385, 388, *et seq.*—its identity at the resurrection, ii. 388—the evidence of its resurrection, considered, ii. 389—its transformation, after the resurrection, ii. 391—will be raised free from all deformity, ii. 392—kind of body which will be raised, ii. 393—an illustration of contrivance and design in the works of God, ix. 410, *et seq.*—especially the structure and use of the eye, ix. 430, *et seq.*—the double parts of the body, ix. 436—the configuration of the cavities of the body, ix. 437; and the vertebral column, ix. 438, *et seq.*—is a manifestation of the goodness of God, x. 77
- Human liberty*, how it is not infringed by the government of God, iv. 245
- *nature*, honoured in the condescension of God, iv. 237
- *gross deceit of*, iv. 345
- *sacrifices*, awful prevalence of, in pagan nations, ix. 82; xii. 316
- *skeletons*, why so few found in a fossil state, ix. 355
- Humanity*, displayed in disseminating knowledge, ii. 247—assumed by Christ, in order to be of the seed of Abraham, iii. 489
- *of Christ*, ancient heresies respecting the, x. 343
- Hume*, David, Esq., character of, as an historian, vii. 447—his argument on the evidence of miracles, refuted, ix. 108, *et seq.*—his moral character, ix. 312—on the relation between cause and effect, ix. 326—his theory respecting cause and effect, examined, ix. 380, *et seq.*
- Humility*, a principle of true worship, iii. 208—of Christ, considered, iv. 450
- Hunnius*, Giles, quoted, on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 210
- Hunter*, John, Esq., F.R.S., his researches for the principle of life, noticed, ix. 480
- Hunting*, difference between ancient and modern, vi. 59
- Hurd*, Bishop, on the prophecies of Scripture, ix. 243
- Hurwitz*, Hyman, Esq., his "Introductory Lecture, in the University of London," reviewed, vii. 392–406
- Husband*, the relation in which he stands to his wife, defined, xii. 134—the particular duties of, specified, xii. 135—aberrations of, from particular duties, noticed, xii. 136
- Hutcheson*, Francis, D.D., on the ground of moral obligation, ix. 93
- Hutchinson*, Mr., the life of, a characteristic notice of, v. 222
- Hyde*, Thomas, D.D., his "Religio Veterum Persarum," alluded to, on the traditions respecting the deluge, ix. 51—on Zoroaster, ix. 53, *et seq.*
- Hymns*, the Hymn-books used by the Methodists, noticed, i. 536—exalted character of those of the Rev. C. Wesley, v. 296—influence of, on the taste of the Wesleyan societies, v. 297—a comparative estimate of the merits of certain hymn-makers, v. 297—the true character of congregational hymns, v. 297—remarks on the Methodist collection of, v. 300—of the value set upon the Methodist hymns, v. 304
- Hypocrisy*, the baseness of, iii. 148
- Hypostatical union*, the term explained, iii. 116; x. 344—the peculiar value of, iii. 116, 117—diversity of opinion among the ancients respecting, x. 344—scripture view of the, x. 345, *et seq.*—on the application of the divine nature of Christ to circumstances which pertain to the human nature, x. 349—scripture testimonies to, x. 350, *et seq.*—a doctrine neces-

sary to the interpretation of much Scripture, x. 351

*Hyrcanus*, the Priest, is invested by Pompey with the government of Judea, vi. 131—is displaced by Gabinius, and restored by Julius Cæsar, vi. 131—his character as a Prince, vi. 128

# I.

*Idleness*, the sin of, exposed, iii. 19

*Idolatry*, of the creature, in what it consists, ii. 133—not the result of ignorance and barbarism, ii. 479—its true nature known only by religion, ii. 479—the result of a vicious heart, ii. 480—where it exists there is no God acknowledged, ii. 480; and no morality recognised, ii. 480; iii. 199—in what way idolatry is opposed to morality, ii. 481—leads to fatal mistakes in religion, ii. 482—fallacy of the idea that asserts the worship of God and of idols to be the same in principle, ii. 482—is inconsistent with religious comfort, ii. 483—annihilates the doctrine of Providence, ii. 484—and excludes hope from its system, ii. 485—no idolater can have hope of salvation, ii. 485—the great guilt of, stated, ii. 486; vi. 98—means devised by human wisdom to remedy the evils of, fallacious, ii. 487—evils of, not to be remedied by human laws, ii. 488; nor by science, ii. 489—triumph of the kingdom of Christ over, iii. 199—dire hostility of, to the Gospel, iii. 199—the true key to all the idolatry in the world, stated, iv. 64—two kinds of, vi. 98—spoken of in Scripture as a voluntary offence, vi. 98—awful evils of, vi. 99—restrained by severe penalties, vi. 99—confounded by the sun

and moon standing still, vi. 102—character of, vii. 346—renunciation of, in the Sandwich Islands, viii. 99—origin of, in Egypt, viii. 169—the miserable uncertainty connected with, viii. 486—general origin of, alluded to, ix. 28—predictions concerning the idolatry of the Jews, considered, ix. 255, *et seq.*—not chargeable on the Apostles in worshipping Christ, x. 330, *et seq.*

*Idols*, Christians cautioned against things offered to, vi. 270—immoral character of the, among the Heathen, ix. 83

*Idol*, from whence derived, ix. 488

*Ignatius*, on the duty of a primitive Bishop, xii. 176

*Ignorance*, animadversion on the advocates of, ii. 239—conduct of Christ opposed to, ii. 240—ignorance destructive of the dignity and usefulness of man, ii. 241, 242—evils of popular ignorance, ii. 243—impedes the Gospel, ii. 243—is destructive of virtue, ii. 243; and of happiness, ii. 245—pleasures of, defined, ii. 245—misereries of ignorance, ii. 246—its destructive character, ii. 248—is incompatible with the Mosaic and Christian dispensations, iv. 462—the fearful state of, in the heathen world, ix. 84, *et seq.*

*Ιλασμος*, propitiatory sense of the term, illustrated, xi. 38, 106

*Illyrius*, Matthias Flaccus, quoted, on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 210

*Image*, Christ the image of God, explained, iv. 311—man made in the image of God, considered, vi. 33; x. 386—the phrase, “express image of his person,” illustrated, vi. 313—conformity to the image of God, enjoined, viii. 395

*Immateriality of God*, importance of the doctrine of, ix. 471

- Immateriality of the soul*, closely associated with the doctrine of the immateriality of God, ix. 472
- Immersion*, proved to be not the only legitimate mode of baptism, xii. 268—an ancient practice, xii. 269—recognised by Tertullian and Cyprian, who did not deny the validity of sprinkling, xii. 270—why the practice of is favoured by several national churches, xii. 270—baptism by immersion, with its appendages, a corruption of the ordinance, xii. 271—import of the term “baptize,” considered, xii. 272—no satisfactory instance can be adduced of baptism by immersion, xii. 274—the baptism of Jordan, fully considered, xii. 274, *et seq.*—proofs advanced by immersionists in favour of their system, examined, xii. 278, *et seq.* See *Baptism*.
- Immodesty*, Scriptures defended from the charge of, ix. 330
- Immortality*, pleasing prospect of, to a good man, ii. 260—a portion of primitive theology, ii. 385—recognised in systems of Paganism, ii. 385—of the soul, considered, iii. 27—not demonstrable on the ground of philosophy, iii. 28—confirmed by the transfiguration, iii. 91—views of, exhibited in the Gospel, iii. 157—confused notions of the ancients concerning, ii. 429; ix. 15, 67, *et seq.*; xii. 313—the doctrine of, one of revelation, ix. 29—denied by several of the ancient philosophers, xii. 313
- Immutability of God*, considered, viii. 487—defined, ix. 367; x. 40—scripture testimonies of the, x. 40—moral uses of the doctrine, x. 41—general proof of the truth of, x. 40, 41—testimony of Plato, in favour of the, x. 42—in what respect not inconsistent with change in the Deity, x. 43; xii. 60—various speculations concerning the, x. 44
- Impartiality*, a prominent character in the justice of God, x. 99
- *of God*, impugned by the doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation, xi. 354
- Imperfection*, the character of finite beings, x. 85—does not necessarily imply a liability to sin, x. 85, *et seq.*
- Imprecations*, of Scripture, noticed, ix. 331; xii. 366
- Impenitence*, and rejection of Christ, closely connected, iv. 480
- Improved version of the New Testament*, character of, x. 183, 184—on the phrase, “Emmanuel, God with us,” x. 202—on creation, being ascribed to the Word of God, x. 206—on the confession of Thomas, x. 207—on the title of Christ, “Great God and our Saviour,” x. 208—on Heb. i. 8, x. 209—on the phrase, “the true God,” x. 213—on the title, “God, blessed for ever,” x. 215—on the term, “only begotten of the Father,” x. 240
- Imputation*, of Christ’s obedience, an absurd and fallacious doctrine, xi. 75—meaning of the term, xi. 192, 212—the imputation of Adam’s sin, considered, xi. 198, *et seq.*—on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 203, *et seq.*—objections to this doctrine, xi. 214, *et seq.*
- Imputed righteousness*, Antinomian views of, examined and refuted, xi. 178, *et seq.*—are derogatory to the doctrine of atonement, xi. 181—views of, entertained by Calvin, examined, xi. 186, *et seq.*, 191, *et seq.*; by Arminius, xi. 88; by Wesley, xi. 189—objectionable terms in which the doctrine has been expressed, xi. 190—meaning of the term

- "imputation," xi. 192—scriptures supposed to support the Calvinian view of, considered, xi. 192, *et seq.*—the imputation of Adam's sin, destructive to the Calvinian and Antinomian idea of the imputed righteousness of Christ, xi. 198, *et seq.*—in what respects the righteousness of Christ is imputed, xi. 202—faith imputed for righteousness, considered, xi. 203, *et seq.*—ancient testimonies in favour of this doctrine, xi. 206, *et seq.*—explanation of terms, expressing this doctrine, xi. 211—objections to this doctrine, examined, xi. 214, *et seq.*
- "*In the beginning*," meaning of the phrase, vi. 19
- Inauguration of Christ to his regal dignity*, ii. 304—peculiar circumstances attending it, ii. 305
- Incarnation of the Son of God*, considered, ii. 433—is an instance of deep humiliation, ii. 434—was a qualification for Christ's office of High Priest, ii. 434—was intended to exemplify the religion of Christ, ii. 435; and that he might suffer for sins, ii. 435—is illustrative of the righteousness of Christ, iii. 165—the merciful designs contemplated in, iii. 242—the state in which it placed our Lord, iii. 246—was intimated by the appearance of a man in Ezekiel's vision, iv. 270
- Incomprehensibility of God*, defined, ix. 367
- Indelicacy*, Scriptures defended from the charge of, ix. 330
- Independency*, an ecclesiastical form of government, described, vii. 90—is not the Methodist mode, vii. 91—evils of the independent system, vii. 96—the present form of, unknown in the early churches, xii. 186
- 
- *of God*, defined, ix. 367
- India*, state of Christianity among Catholic converts in, vii. 317—success of Wesleyan Missions there, vii. 327—obstacles to be surmounted, vii. 328
- Industry*, an indispensable qualification of a Christian Missionary, i. 257
- Infant baptism*, an important argument in favour of, noticed, iii. 79—how it affects the salvation of infants, iii. 80—the benefit of, to the child, considered, iii. 80; xii. 266—the impressive significance of this ordinance, iii. 82—arguments in favour of, adduced, xii. 244, *et seq.*—on Jewish baptism of proselytes, xii. 246, *et seq.*—the baptism of infants was a doctrine understood by Jewish believers, xii. 248—Peter Edwards on scripture authority for, xii. 248, *et seq.*—infants are not prohibited entering the covenant, xii. 245—import of baptism to infants, xii. 255—a common apostolic practice, xii. 257—its antiquity, xii. 264—nature of Tertullian's opposition to, considered, xii. 264. See *Baptism*.
- Infants*, dying in infancy, damnation of, a horrid doctrine, iii. 75—on what it is grounded, xi. 355—salvation of, argued from the benevolence of God, iii. 76; from the justice of God, iii. 76; from the mercy of God, iii. 77; from the constitution of the divine administration, iii. 77; the actual condition of, under the Gospel dispensation, iii. 78; and from their interest in the institutions of the church, iii. 78—how they enter into covenant, iii. 79—salvation of, how affected by infant baptism, iii. 80—future safety of, proved by the words of Christ, iii. 80 case of, dying in infancy, considered, x. 452—why not de-

- livered from the penalty of death, x. 453—justification of, x. 454—are interested in the intercession of Christ, x. 456—and benefited by the ordinances of the church, x. 456—of believers, peculiar relation of, xi. 343—the salvation of, dying in infancy, alluded to, xi. 355—not prohibited from entering the covenant, xii. 245—declared by Christ to be members of his church, xii. 251—arguments in favour of the baptism of, xii. 244, *et seq.*—evasive criticisms of Baptist writers on “infant church membership,” exploded, xii. 253, *et seq.*
- Infanticide*, common among the ancients, ix. 77 ; xii. 315
- Infidel writers*, their notorious destitution of acquaintance with the Scriptures, ix. 327
- Infidelity*, conflicting and degrading opinions of, concerning man, ii. 65 ; viii. 424—absurdity of these notions, ii. 71—is enmity against God, ii. 306—treats with derision the doctrine of the cross, iii. 65—cannot answer the question, “What must I do to be saved?” iii. 333—perverts the doctrine of the longsuffering of God, iii. 366—a vain refuge of man, iv. 28—unsoundness of, noticed, iv. 29—the great cause of, iv. 186—cause of its progress in France, iv. 249, 516—suffered to warn and instruct mankind, iv. 249, 516—the absurdity of, in rejecting a revelation, iv. 397–400—immoral tendency of, iv. 441—the decay and ruin of all moral principle, iv. 468—tendency to, in youth, accounted for, iv. 470—its best antidote, the truth of God, iv. 515—prevails most where the Bible is least known, iv. 515—greatly prevalent in the West India colonies, vi. 514—is the offspring of Popery, vii. 444
- why the infidel hates the Gospel, vii. 444—folly and inconsistency of, viii. 12—absurdity of, in denying the history of Christianity, viii. 13, *et seq.*—various theories of, exploded, viii. 15, *et seq.*—charges the Scriptures with an immoral tendency, ix. 310–313—argument of, against revelation from the comparative insignificance of man, examined, ix. 334
- Infinite wisdom*, meaning of the phrase, x. 5, 6
- Inheritance of the saints*, what it implies, ii. 377 ; iii. 157—in what a meetness for, consists, iii. 160
- Innocence*, required in an acceptable sacrifice for sin, iii. 115—the innocency of the Messiah, considered, iii. 394—a character of the sacrifice of Christ, viii. 541
- Innocent*, being punished instead of the guilty, considered, xi. 81
- Inquirers*, after religious truth, two classes of, noticed, iv. 131
- Inquiries*, religious, folly of making, without a holy object, iii. 265
- Inquisition*, evil of the, connected with the history of Spain, viii. 82, *et seq.*—suppression of, in South America, viii. 231
- Inspiration*, meaning of the term, when applied to the Scriptures, vi. 11—quality of this power, noticed, vi. 14—special advantages of an inspired Scripture, vi. 15
- Instinct*, difference between, and reason, x. 53
- Institutions*, positive, of Christianity, iii. 60—children have an interest in them, iii. 78—of the church, considered, xii. 222, *et seq.*
- Instruction*, religious, an essential part of education, ii. 41—benefit to man, ii. 241—a work of humanity, ii. 249 ; and of patriotism, ii. 250—an advantage of union with the church,

- iii. 184—the necessity of, acknowledged by the wisest of the Heathen, ix. 61. See *Education*.
- Instruments* employed in the promulgation of the Gospel, divinely selected, ii. 446—adapted for the peculiar exigencies of the church, ii. 447—nature of those employed by the Almighty in judgment and mercy, iii. 479—their comparative weakness and insignificance, iv. 217
- Insufficiency of man*, the ground and reason of all religion, vi. 341
- Intellect*, the light of the, from God, iii. 449
- Intelligence*, is not the result of organization, ix. 473—is not a property of matter, ix. 472  
—*of God*, demonstrated, ix. 393, *et seq.*
- Intercession of Christ*, to give effect to our prayers, an end of, iv. 323—his office of intercessor, considered, viii. 432. See *Priesthood, Atonement, &c.*
- Intercessory prayer*, importance and reasonableness of, xii. 61
- Intermediate state of the soul*, considered, xii. 14
- Interpretation of the Scriptures*, various modes of, viii. 72—the literal and allegorical interpreters contrasted, viii. 75—importance of right principles of, viii. 79, 80—rules to be observed in, ix. 132, 218
- Inward religion*, is found in the state of the understanding, iv. 347; of the judgment, iv. 348; of the will, iv. 350; of our principles, iv. 351; and of the feelings, iv. 352—difference between outward and inward religion, contrasted, iv. 355, 356
- Ireland*, cause of her benighted condition, vii. 443—evils of Popery in that country, vii. 448—the proselyting spirit of Popery there, vii. 449—plan for the amelioration of, vii. 452
- Irenæus*, on Christ being the Jehovah of the Old Testament, x. 184—on the tenets of Cerinthus, x. 282—mentions infant baptism as the practice of his time, xii. 265
- Irreconcilable*, circumstances in the administration of divine government, considered, x. 100, *et seq.*
- Isaac*, an eminent type of Christ, ii. 253; of the church of Christ, ii. 253—his character, ii. 254—his meditation at eventide, noticed, ii. 258—his faith in the promised Messiah, ii. 259—allegory respecting him and Ishmael, vi. 279—this allegory explained, vii. 379—parallel between him and Ishmael, vii. 369—character of the covenant with, vii. 377—the offering of, defended against the cavils of infidelity, ix. 329
- Isaiah*, character of the vision which he beheld, iv. 144—the poetical style of his predictions, vi. 139–145—chronological order of his prophecy, vi. 166—prophecy of, concerning Christ, considered, ix. 263, *et seq.*—defence of his prophetic character, ix. 274—the vision of, a remarkable illustration of the Trinity, x. 141
- Ishmael*, a type of the Jews cast off, iii. 281—prophecy respecting, how accomplished, vi. 67—the allegory concerning him and Isaac, noticed, vi. 279; and explained, vii. 379—parallel between him and Isaac, vii. 369—the promise to, not a covenant, vii. 376, 377—was admitted into spiritual covenant with the God of Abraham, vii. 377, 378
- Israel*, the kingdom of, how long it continued, vi. 115
- Israelites*, why oppressed by the Egyptians, vi. 73—their great fecundity in Egypt, vi. 74—why they wandered forty years in the wilderness, vi. 101—



their offence in asking a King, considered, vi. 103—the kingdom of, how long it continued, vi. 115—conjectures respecting the existence of the ten tribes, vi. 116—moral character of the, vi. 118–120. See *Jews*.

## J.

*Jackson*, Thomas, D.D., on the incomprehensibility of the divine nature, ix. 509

———, Rev. Thomas, his edition of the Works of the Rev. John Wesley, noticed, v. 243, 347

*Jacob*, his conduct in regard to Esau, censured, vi. 69—the manner in which he obtained his wife, vi. 69—import of his mysterious dream, vi. 69—nature of his intercourse with the angel, vi. 96—character of the benedictions he pronounced upon his children, vi. 70—his prediction concerning Shiloh, vi. 71—why his descendants were oppressed by the Egyptians, vi. 73—the election of his posterity to distinguished privileges, considered, xi. 336

*Jailer of Philippi*, the baptism of the house of the, xii. 259

*Jamaica*, persecuting and revolutionary proceedings in, i. 493—remarks on the opposition raised to Missionary exertions in that island, i. 504—insurrectionary movement in, i. 552—Wesleyan Missionaries are freed from the charge of any participation therein, i. 559—remote cause of these disturbances, attributed to the restrictions laid upon Christian Missionaries, i. 560—ludicrous examination of a Missionary on a theological subject, by the Common Council of, vi. 516

*Jamblicus*, on the necessity of divine instruction, ix. 62

*James*, his impetuous zeal re-proved, vi. 230

*James, the Less*, his character and the peculiar object of his Epistle, vi. 315, 316—why inscribed to the “twelve tribes,” vi. 315, 316—how James and Paul may be reconciled on the subject of justification, vi. 316; xi. 234

*Jameson*, Professor, his “Mineralogical Illustrations of Cuvier’s Theory,” quoted, ix. 341—on the Arian interpretation of the term “angel of the Lord,” x. 167—on the phrases, “Memra,” “the Word,” or “the Word of the Lord,” x. 270, *et seq.*

*Jansenius*, Cornelius, his condemnation by the Church of Rome, xi. 417

*Jason*, the High Priest, his apostasy, vi. 119

ⲁⲩ explained, x. 232

*Jebb*, Bishop, his remarks on a poetical passage in Isaiah, vi. 133—his “Sacred Literature,” referred to, vi. 133

*Jedediah*, the term explained, x. 191

*Jehovah*, etymology of the word, x. 135—its important signification, x. 136—spoken of under plural appellations, x. 136—of the Old Testament, considered, x. 162, *et seq.*—a divine person, x. 162, *et seq.*—an object of worship and trust, x. 164—objections to this doctrine, examined, x. 164, *et seq.*—scripture testimonies adduced, x. 162, *et seq.*—proved to be not God the Father, x. 171, *et seq.*—appeared under the Patriarchal and Levitical dispensations, x. 171, *et seq.*—of the antediluvian world, was Christ, x. 181—testimonies of the Fathers that he was the Christ of the New Testament, x. 184, *et seq.*—objections answered, x. 186—a title of Christ, considered, x. 190—on this name being given to places, x. 191—import of the argument which applies this name to the Messiah, x. 192—quibbles of

- Socinianism respecting, noticed, x. 193
- Jehovah Jireh*, import of the term, x. 191
- *Nissi*, the term explained, x. 191
- *Shallum*, import of the term, x. 191
- Jenkin*, Robert, D.D., quoted on the oracles of Heathenism, ix. 240—on the object of the publication of St. John's Gospel, x. 282—and on the moral agency of man, x. 418
- Jeremiah*, the beautiful and tender style of his predictions, vi. 145–150—the chronological order of his prophecy, vi. 167—its peculiar character, vi. 167—fixes the duration of the Babylonish captivity, ix. 260—defended from the charge of falsehood, ix. 272, 275—his parable of the potter, illustrated, xi. 319, *et seq.*
- Jericho*, where situated, vi. 176
- Jerome*, his catalogue of the books of Scripture, ix. 185—on the object of the publication of St. John's Gospel, x. 282—on the offices of "pastors and teachers," xii. 170
- Jerusalem*, importance of, as a Missionary station, i. 370–372—why the Jews were powerfully attached to this city, ii. 373—circumstances connected with Christ's entry into, iii. 171—which is above, the church compared to, iii. 282—why called "the mother of us all," iii. 284—contrast between the heavenly and temporal Jerusalem, iii. 288—besieged by the Romans, vi. 92, 93, 205, *et seq.*—besieged and taken by Pompey, vi. 131—benevolence of Christ toward, vi. 205—events connected with the destruction of, vi. 207, *et seq.*—how long after the death of Christ, vi. 210—fate of the Christians at, during the siege, vi. 210—mournful state of Christianity there, vii. 348
- Jewel*, John, D.D., Bishop, on the influences of the Holy Spirit, xi. 172
- Jewish Council*, their treatment of Stephen, ii. 420—their horrid malignity accounted for, ii. 421
- *dispensation*, recognised an approach to an union with the Gentiles, ii. 338—designed for the benefit of the world, iii. 458—essentially different from the Christian, iv. 162—is a comment upon the Christian, iv. 277—how far slavery was permitted under the, vi. 94—a type of the Christian dispensation, vi. 307—the Christian and Jewish, contrasted, vi. 314
- *Rabbis*, not safe guides in Biblical interpretation, and why, vii. 516—on the doctrine of the resurrection, xii. 23
- *Scribe*, a description of one in Russia, viii. 208, *et seq.*—rules observed by, in transcribing the law, viii. 209
- Jews*, restoration of the, implied in the vision of dry bones, ii. 2.—views which they entertained of the Messiah, ii. 236—are enemies of God, ii. 306—systematically despised the poor and the outcast, ii. 330—attempts to convert, a work of faith, ii. 362—their attachment to the metropolis of Judea, ii. 373—a people guilty of great ingratitude, ii. 399—privileges of, did not exempt from punishment, ii. 402—their zeal in the erection of the tabernacle and temple, ii. 415—prayed for the conversion of the Heathen, ii. 470—are a separate people, in order to preserve the doctrine of salvation by sacrifice, iii. 58—why termed "prisoners of hope," iii. 179—destruction of the polity of, foretold, iii. 233—expected a ruling Messiah, iii. 234—their claim to be the church of God, noticed, iii. 281—their views of the Messiah's kingdom, iii. 306

—the covenant in which they entered with God, iii. 320—doctrine of a future state known to, iii. 363—the ecclesiastical constitution of, to be shaken, iii. 402—civil state of, to be removed, iii. 403—their rejection of the doctrine of Christ, considered, iv. 2—their day of visitation, iv. 5—how this day was neglected, iv. 8—distinction between the Jew and Gentile, not the act of God, iv. 63—feasts of, alluded to, iv. 98—depravity of, displayed in the history of Christ, iv. 113—evil of religious bigotry conspicuous among, iv. 342—the gross formality of, iv. 346—their temptations to apostatize from Christ, considered, iv. 419—why termed a “peculiar people,” vi. 90—calamities which befel them, vi. 91—how far slavery was permitted among them, vi. 94—the proverbial inhospitality of, accounted for, vi. 95—possessed a perfect political freedom, vi. 95—encouraged education and literary pursuits, vi. 96—why prohibited from worshipping God in groves, vi. 99—employed in the extermination of the Canaanites, vi. 100—moral character of the, vi. 118—120—history of, from the captivity to the coming of Christ, vi. 120, *et seq.*—in great favour with Seleucus, vi. 122—their language, vi. 124—mode of sitting at meals, vi. 193—sad moral state of, as described by James, vi. 317—much influenced by the Gnostic heresy, viii. 28—acquainted with the doctrine of the resurrection, viii. 42—state of, in Russia, viii. 211—their strong attachment to Palestine, viii. 211—the dark moral character of, viii. 212—their hereditary malignant feeling toward Christ, viii. 212—their frequent falls and public restoration, ix. 41—

the credit in which they stood with the Persian empire, ix. 43—preserved and propagated the true religion, ix. 38, *et seq.*—a special object of the Jewish Church, noticed, ix. 56—predictions respecting the apostasy and idolatry of, ix. 255, *et seq.*; xii. 326—dispersion of, ix. 257; xii. 327—and their restoration, considered, ix. 259, *et seq.*—they distinguished between the Son of God and their Messiah, x. 223, 224—were familiarized with the idea of expiatory sacrifice, xi. 99, *et seq.*—how far they comprehended the spirituality of Moses’s law, xi. 134—the election of the, xi. 306, *et seq.*; and its characteristic features, xi. 309—the rejection of the, as the visible church, xi. 312, *et seq.*, 338, *et seq.*—no unrighteousness in the original election of, xi. 316—justice of God in the destruction of their civil and ecclesiastical polity, exhibited, xi. 327—the case of the Jews in the age of the Apostles, considered, xi. 333, *et seq.*

*Job*, the book of, to whom attributed, vi. 162—leading doctrines contained in it, vi. 162—the character of Job, vi. 163; viii. 414; ix. 40—theological views of his friends, viii. 413—his gratitude to God for life, considered, viii. 413, *et seq.*—when supposed to have flourished, ix. 40, 87—importance of the book of, ix. 87—expiatory sacrifices familiar to, xi. 99, 120, 157

*Joel*, chronological order of his prophecy, vi. 166—its peculiar character, vi. 166—the import of his prophecy, x. 322

*John*, Saint, saw the glorified body of Christ in Patmos, ii. 392—why he applied the term “Word” to our Lord, ii. 432; x. 273, 280, *et seq.*—his peculiar mode of commencing his Gospel, noticed, iv. 89—when

- his Gospel was written, vi. 172—its distinguishing character, vi. 172; x. 282—his impetuous zeal reproved, vi. 230—character and leading design of his Epistle, vi. 319—when the revelations of the Apocalypse were made known to him, vi. 324—alluded to the Gnostics in various parts of his writings, viii. 34—date of his First Epistle, viii. 49—his personal character, x. 267—object of the publication of his Gospel, x. 282—the argument drawn from his use of the term “Logos” irresistible, x. 284
- John the Baptist*, predicted by Isaiah, ii. 310; iv. 309—his appearance described, iv. 309—character of his mission, iv. 473—events connected with his birth, iv. 473—his preaching considered, iv. 474—his peculiar office of Prophet, iv. 475—the success of his ministry, iv. 477—in what sense he “prepared the way” of Christ, vi. 179—why he was sent to precede the Messiah, vi. 180—difference between Christian baptism and that of John, x. 369; xii. 242—the form of prayer which he gave his followers, xii. 76—his baptism in Jordan, fully considered, xii. 274, *et seq.*
- Johnstone*, Sir Alexander, Chief Justice in Ceylon, his character, and the efficient aid he rendered the Methodist Mission in that island, i. 271
- Jonah*, chronological order of his prophecy, vi. 166
- , Bishop of the diocese of Orel, described, viii. 200
- Jonathan*, the Targumist, on the phrases “the Word,” and “the Word of the Lord,” x. 270
- Jones*, Sir William, his opinion concerning the origin of nations, vi. 59—and the losing of the primitive language at Babel, vi. 60—on the Institutes of Menu, ix. 47—on Zoroaster, and the reformed religion of Persia, ix. 53—on the prophecies of Scripture, ix. 245
- Jones*, Rev. William, M.A., on the Jewish form of benediction, x. 140—and on the existence of three persons in the Godhead, x. 143
- , William, Rev. Editor of the New Evangelical Magazine, his character of Mr. Watson as a Preacher, i. 182—his report of one of his sermons preached in the City-road chapel, i. 184—187
- Jordan*, a description of this river, vi. 101—Dr. E.D. Clarke’s account of it, vi. 175—the baptism of John in, considered, xii. 274, *et seq.*—Maundrell’s account of, xii. 276
- Jortin*, John, D.D., his remark on the diabolical possessions of the time of our Lord, v. 346, 503
- Josephus*, the historian, alludes to the destruction of Sodom, vi. 67—quoted on the books of the Old Testament, vi. 80, 81—on the invasion of Judea by the Romans, vi. 92, 93—his relation of the martyred mother and her seven children, vi. 127—on the destruction of Jerusalem, vi. 208—on the holy places, vii. 524, *et seq.*—his use of the term “heresy,” viii. 19—his quotation of a traditional record concerning the deluge, ix. 50—on the authenticity of the history of Moses, ix. 149—on the books of the Old Testament, ix. 184—on the dispersion of the Jews, xii. 327—his catalogue of the books of the Old Testament, alluded to, xii. 334
- Joshua*, the High Priest, a personal type of Christ, iii. 123—the special work to which he was appointed, iii. 128
- Joy*, the worship of God a source of, iii. 145—great reason for, in Christ having salvation, iii. 169—nature of that communicated by the Gospel, iv. 215

- Judah*, supremacy of the tribe of, ix. 253, 254
- Judaism*, cannot answer the question, "What must I do to be saved?" iii. 333—defined, xii. 303—why the Jewish religion is called "the law," xii. 305
- Judaizers*, in the primitive church, the great opposers of Christian truth, iii. 55; vi. 294—nature of their errors, vi. 297—their character as given by St. Paul, vi. 304
- Judas Iscariot*, his character, vi. 191
- Jude*, character of his Epistle, vi. 323—object of, vi. 323—Bishop Benson's opinion respecting, vi. 323
- Judea*, unmolested by Alexander the Great, vi. 121—an appendage to the Macedonian empire, vi. 122—to whom it was subject, prior to the death of Alexander, vi. 122—history of the leading public events of, vi. 120–132—political changes subsequent to the death of Herod the Great, vi. 174, *et seq.*—general appearance of the country, vi. 176—the fertility of, disputed by infidelity, vi. 177—the climate of, alluded to, vi. 177
- Judge*, used in a regal as well as in a judicial sense, iii. 278; iv. 425—the term applied to God in the exercise of mercy, iii. 278; iv. 425—in working conviction among the people, iii. 279—in his character as King, iv. 425—God, as Judge, to be habitually remembered, viii. 388
- Judgment*, how the sins of men will be arraigned on the day of, iii. 367–369—is far less exhibited among men than mercy, iv. 55—proceedings of, viii. 388—the judgments of Christ, considered, viii. 529—the doctrine of, grounded on that of redemption, x. 101, 119—on the passage where the Son is said not to know the day of judgment, x. 296, *et seq.*
- Judgment of man*, a seat of inward religion, iv. 348
- Judicial justice*, defined, x. 98
- *visitation*, in a partial and temporary hiding of the truth, iv. 10—when it is final and eternal, iv. 11
- Julian*, the Emperor, his testimony to the truth of Gospel history, ix. 171; xii. 343
- Julius Cæsar*, denied the soul's immortality, ix. 72; xii. 313—patronized gladiatorial combats, ix. 76; xii. 314
- Junius and Tremellius*, quoted on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 210
- Jurieu*, Mr. Peter, his testimony concerning supernatural appearances, v. 500 (n)
- Just*, as applied to Christ, denotes his righteousness, iii. 165—illustrated by his divinity and incarnation, iii. 165—by his death, and work in the heart of man, iii. 166
- Justice*, the obligation of, not indicated by the works of God, ix. 13—defined, x. 97—legislative justice, what, x. 97—distributive and remunerative justice, x. 98—punitive and commutative justice, x. 99—a duty we owe to our neighbour, xii. 109—various definitions of, xii. 109—ethical justice, defined, xii. 109
- *of God*, demands of the, connected with the fall of man, ii. 293—suggests no way of pardon for the guilty, ii. 322—acquiesces in the scheme of human redemption, ii. 323—is in favour of the salvation of infants, iii. 76—defined, iii. 76; ix. 368; x. 97; xi. 6—no expectation of mercy derived from a contemplation of the, iii. 356—opposed to the scheme of Socinianism, iv. 175—how exercised in harmony with mercy, iv. 176—Christ the image of, iv. 312—should

- be constantly remembered, viii. 385—consistency of the doctrine of atonement with, ix. 299, *et seq.*—righteous character of the law of God, x. 98—apparently irreconcilable circumstances in the administration of, considered, x. 100—general judgment, associated with, x. 101—imperfect and unsettled notions of the Heathen concerning, x. 103—moral results of scriptural views of, x. 104—exemplified in the penalty of death on Adam's sin, x. 450, *et seq.*; xi. 8, *et seq.*—scheme of redemption harmonizes with, xi. 6—the punitive nature of the, xi. 41—impugned by the doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation, xi. 351—afflictions among men, how consistent with, xi. 352
- Justification*, an important doctrine of Scripture, a benefit resulting from the atonement, i. 439—an essential part of the Gospel of Christ, ii. 278—value of, noticed, ii. 374—by faith, a promise made to us in Christ, ii. 456—the blessing defined, ii. 456; xi. 59—evangelical views of, v. 14; xi. 60—view of, entertained by the early Methodists, v. 80—Mr. Wesley's remarks on a sermon on this subject, v. 105—by works, a doctrine of Popery, v. 105—definition of, in the early Minutes of the Methodist Conference, considered, v. 158—how connected with adoption, v. 158 (n)—the order of passing into a state of, v. 166—by faith, the doctrine of the eminent Divines of the Church, v. 185—attainable in this life, v. 394; xi. 242—antiquity of the doctrine, vi. 65—evangelical sense of the doctrine, vi. 255—St. Paul's argument on this subject, vi. 256—free and gratuitous justification, unscriptural, vi. 258—a justified man is regenerate, vi. 259—productive of great felicity, vi. 259—Paul and James reconciled on the subject of, vi. 316—absurdity of the notion that sanctification precedes justification, vii. 220—of infants, x. 454—and adults, contrasted, x. 455—how connected with faith in the blood of Christ, and a strictly righteous act, xi. 63, *et seq.*—two methods of, defined, xi. 63—impossibility of, by deeds of the law, xi. 64—does not free men from the authority of the moral law, xi. 69—the grand end of, xi. 69—consequences of disobedience in the justified, stated, xi. 69—obedience not the rule of our continued justification, xi. 70—the Antinomian notion that justification is a matter of right and not of grace, refuted, xi. 77—cannot be claimed as a right, xi. 78—scripture view of the doctrine of, xi. 173—synonymous with terms “pardon,” “remission,” &c., xi. 173—this signification of the term, illustrated, xi. 174—the Antinomian notion of an eternal justification, exploded, xi. 176—on the distinction between justification and sanctification, xi. 177—does not import the doctrine of the imputed active or passive righteousness of Christ, xi. 177—by faith alone, the doctrine of Scripture, xi. 220—not peculiar to Calvinism, xi. 220—errors concerning this doctrine, noticed, xi. 221—objections to this doctrine, refuted, xi. 222, *et seq.*—is not contrary to morality, xi. 223—is not eternal, xi. 225—is confounded with sanctification by the Church of Rome, xi. 226—influence of this theory on some English Divines, noticed, xi. 229—not accomplished by faith and works united, xi. 227, 244; or by a faith which appropriates the merits of Christ to make up for our

imperfect obedience, xi. 228—in what respects repentance is necessary to, xi. 231—the theory of justification by regeneration, untenable, xi. 231, 232—Bishop Bull's theory of, examined and refuted, xi. 233, *et seq.*—Paul and James reconciled on this doctrine, xi. 234—the doctrine which defers the administration of justification to the last day, stated, and proved to be erroneous, xi. 241, *et seq.*—a present attainment, xi. 242—distinction between the justification of the last day and that which is now vouchsafed, xi. 243—an argument in favour of justification by faith and works drawn from the proceedings of the last day, refuted, xi. 244—Dr. John Taylor's theory of, delusive and absurd, xi. 246—the concomitants of, considered, xi. 248, *et seq.* See *Forgiveness, Pardon, &c.*

*Justifying faith*, as inculcated by Christ, ii. 231—consequences of, ii. 237—defects of, ii. 459—concomitants of, ii. 460—is not general confidence, but special trust, ii. 461—is the result of a work of grace on the heart, iv. 367—its high value, iv. 369—connects man with the great atonement, iv. 369—371—and with the omnipotence of divine grace, iv. 369—371—how the principle of this faith is tried, iv. 373, *et seq.*—the final honours of, iv. 381—both present and future, iv. 381—384—views of, entertained in the Minutes of the Conference, illustrated, v. 161—165—a definition of, vi. 255—Ers-  
 kine's notions of justifying faith, refuted, vii. 206—how this faith operates, vii. 209—Wit-  
 sius's confused ideas of, vii. 501—saving faith, defined, vii. 502; viii. 435; xi. 216, *et seq.*, 223, *et seq.*—inexplicable, on the Socinian scheme, x. 126—

the objection that the doctrine is unfavourable to morality, refuted, xi. 223—does not include works of evangelical obedience, xi. 227—does not appropriate the merits of Christ to make up for our imperfect obedience, xi. 228—in what respect faith can only be said to be the root of obedience, xi. 228, 229—not a mere belief in the truth of the Gospel, xi. 238—the theory of Whitby exploded on this subject, xi. 238—and also of Bishop Tomline, xi. 238, 239—where the error of these schemes lies, xi. 240—is personal and appropriating, xi. 257

*Justin*, the historian, his allusion to Moses, ix. 149; xii. 332—on the success of Christianity, xii. 359

——, *Martyr*, on the punishment of crucifixion, vi. 213—objections of his day to the doctrine of the resurrection, viii. 44—advocates the resurrection of the same identical body, viii. 46—the Socinian calumny against, noticed, viii. 61—charges the heathen philosophers with borrowing from the sacred writers, ix. 4—on the authenticity of the history of Moses, ix. 150—on the early progress of Christianity, i. 320—that Christ was the Jehovah of the Old Testament, x. 184—on the form of baptism, x. 371—on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 207—on the doctrine of the resurrection, xii. 23—on the mode of worship in the primitive church, xii. 77—on the office of Deacon, xii. 170—on the mode of worship in the early church, xii. 175—on the substitution of Christian baptism for circumcision, xii. 243—mentions infant-baptism, as the practice of his time, xii. 265

*Juvenal*, his mention of Moses,

alluded to, ix. 149; xii. 333—  
allusion of, to Jesus Christ, ix.  
167

## K.

*Kappooism*, of Ceylon, alluded to,  
vii. 334

*Καταλασσω*, explained, xi. 44

*Κατηχουμενοι*, explained, v. 101

*Kempis*, Thomas à, his "Chris-  
tian Pattern," characterized,  
v. 6

*Kennicott*, Benjamin, D.D., on  
the excellency of Abel's offer-  
ing, xi. 121

*Kett*, Henry, M.A., on the early  
success of Christianity, ix.  
320, 321

*Keys of the kingdom of heaven*,  
how given to Peter, iii. 94; vi.  
228; xii. 206, *et seq.*—mean-  
ing of the phrase, vi. 228

*Kidd*, Professor, his attempt at  
demonstrating the doctrine of  
the Trinity, x. 109—his "Dis-  
sertation, on the eternal Son-  
ship of Christ," quoted, x. 254  
—on the importance of the  
doctrine of the eternal filiation  
of Christ, x. 258

*Kidder*, Bishop, on Christ being  
said not to know when the  
day of judgment shall take  
place, x. 298—on the crimi-  
nality of murder, xii. 119

*Kimchi*, Rabbi David, on the  
name Jehovah, x. 190

*King*, Christ's work in the heart  
as a, noticed, iii. 166; and in  
the government of his church,  
iii. 167—the offence of the  
Israelites in asking a King con-  
sidered, vi. 103—why our  
Lord founded many parables  
on the notion of a King or  
King's son, vi. 182—God as  
our Sovereign, to be habitually  
remembered, viii. 386—the au-  
thority of Christ as, consid-  
ered, viii. 528—the duties of so-  
vereign power, defined, xii. 153  
—rights of the Sovereign, and  
duties of the subject, are reci-  
procal, xii. 153—scriptural ac-

count of the duties of a, no-  
ticed, xii. 153, 154—and also  
of subjects, xii. 154

*King*, Archbishop, his "Sermon  
on Predestination," referred  
to, vii. 291—the substance  
of his theory, stated, vii.  
294, *et seq.*—evils con-  
nected therewith, vii. 298—  
examination of the theory, vii.  
299, *et seq.*—on the passions  
ascribed to God in Scripture,  
vii. 304; x. 31—his theory  
respecting the foreknowledge  
of God, stated, x. 22, *et seq.*  
—and examined, x. 25, *et seq.*  
—Bishop Browne's remarks  
upon it, x. 29—its inapplica-  
bility to the Scripture character  
and perfections of God, x.  
30, *et seq.*—his work "on the  
Origin of Evil," referred to,  
x. 82, 85—on the absurdity  
of the Manichæan scheme, x.  
82—on the absolute perfection  
of the Deity, x. 85—on the  
curse pronounced on the ser-  
pent, x. 428

—, Lord, "his Constitution,  
&c., of the Primitive Church,"  
noticed, v. 143—alluded to in  
Mr. Wesley's letter to the  
American societies, v. 262—  
on the term "hell," viii. 290  
—on forms of prayer, in the  
use of the early church, xii. 77  
— *of Israel*, an important  
title of Christ, considered, x.  
218—an unequivocal mark of  
Divinity, x. 219

— *of the Jews*, an important  
and appropriate title of Christ,  
viii. 402; x. 218

—'s son, import of the title as  
applied to Christ, viii. 401

*Kingdom of Christ*, vast extent  
of the, noticed, ii. 312—moral  
beauty of the, ii. 314—prayer  
offered for the extension of, ii.  
470—the mediatorial kingdom  
of, considered, iii. 25—the end  
of the mediatorial kingdom  
alluded to, iii. 26—the work  
of Christ in the heart, as  
King, noticed, iii. 166—spi-



- ritual nature of, iii. 171, 194—  
the visible kingdom of Christ,  
described, iii. 191—is termed  
the kingdom of God, iii. 192  
—installation of Christ into,  
iii. 192—formed by divine  
agency, iii. 193—contrasted  
with the kingdoms of the  
world, iii. 193—the qualifica-  
tions of the agents in, iii. 194  
—increase of, compared with  
the smallness of its commence-  
ment, iii. 195—the mysterious  
progress of, iii. 196—its effects  
upon other kingdoms, iii. 197  
—not yet fully established,  
and therefore an object of  
prayer, iii. 200—import of the  
phrase, iii. 234—is to rule over  
religious opinion, iii. 234—  
and over the will, iii. 235—  
it prescribes the method of  
saving the guilty, iii. 235—it  
rules over the affections, iii.  
235; and tempers, iii. 236;  
and relations of life, iii. 236—  
“Gospel of the kingdom,”  
import of the phrase, iii. 237  
—all the powers of the earth  
removed to make way for it,  
iii. 404—in what respects it  
shall not be moved, iii. 405—  
cause of its rejection by the  
Jews, iv. 2—characterized by  
a regard for the poor, viii. 404  
—opposition to oppression,  
viii. 405—regards the afflicted,  
viii. 406—encourages righte-  
ousness, viii. 407—and gives  
blessings to men, viii. 408
- Kingdom of God*, that of nature  
and Providence, described, iii.  
190—that alluded to by  
Daniel, iii. 191
- Kings*, the Books of, the truth  
of, corroborated by the re-  
searches of M. Champollion,  
viii. 176
- Kingswood*, Mr. Charles Wesley’s  
account of a riot at, v. 76—  
—progress of the Gospel there,  
v. 77
- *School*, the estab-  
lishment and objects of, v.  
205, 206—effects of, v. 205, 206  
—want of such an academy  
for the sons of Methodists,  
deplored, v. 206
- Kirby*, William, M.A., F.R.S.,  
his “Entomology,” referred  
to, x. 50
- Kirwan*, his testimony to the  
veracity of the Mosaic account  
of the deluge, ix. 351; xii. 368
- Κληρονομεω*, explained, x. 249
- Knowledge*, advantages of, in  
civilized society, ii. 242—aver-  
sion of man to religious knowl-  
edge, ii. 243—pleasures of,  
defined, ii. 245—dissemination  
of, a work of humanity, ii.  
247; of patriotism, ii. 250;  
and of virtue, ii. 251—of God,  
the foundation of morality, ii.  
481—of science, partial and  
temporary, iii. 49—peculiar  
benefit of saving knowledge,  
iii. 50—imperfection of, con-  
cerning the things of God, iii.  
159—man has a faint resem-  
blance of God in, iii. 292—spi-  
ritual, a blessing flowing from  
the death of Christ, iii. 314—  
imperfect and limited in man,  
iii. 321—of the truth, neces-  
sary to salvation, iii. 413—re-  
presented by the term “light,”  
iii. 159; iv. 208—of pardon  
of sin, a Christian privilege,  
iv. 289—inferior to charity,  
iv. 392—the phrase “Know  
the truth,” explained, iv. 402—  
the phrase “Knowledge is  
power,” considered, iv. 413—  
the Bible not opposed to the  
diffusion of, iv. 461—merely  
as such, has impeded the pro-  
gress of the Gospel, iv. 463—  
that which doth improve the  
morals, noticed, iv. 467—may  
be richly experienced, and the  
heart unchanged, vi. 344—  
men more influenced by, in  
other affairs, than in religion,  
vii. 216—progress of, in South  
America, alluded to, viii. 232  
—Methodists exhorted to the  
cultivation of, viii. 371—nature  
of that possessed by man in  
his primitive state, x. 394

- Knowledge of Christ*, a term used to denote the Gospel, ii. 450—importance of the, iii. 46—excellency of, argued from its certainty, iii. 47—from its majesty and grandeur, iii. 48—from its suitableness and adaptation, iii. 49—its peculiar blessedness, iii. 50—its excellency discovered in its comprehensiveness, iii. 51—and in its sanctifying nature, iii. 52—necessity of securing it, iii. 53—duty of diffusing it, iii. 53, 54—Heathen destitute of the, iv. 156
- *of God*, nature and extent of, x. 46—in what sense there is order and succession in, x. 47
- *of a God*, how communicated to the ancient world, ix. 372—not obtained by the exercise of reason, ix. 372
- , religious, a peculiarity of the Christian dispensation, ix. 458—deplorable state of the dark ages, adverted to, iv. 459—source of all moral influence, iv. 463—from the truths presented to the mind, iv. 464—exhibits a standard of duty binding on the conscience, iv. 465
- Knox*, Alexander, Esq., his character of the Rev. J. Wesley, v. 325
- Koran*, the, its character, vii. 382, 383—the authors of it, alluded to, vii. 382, 383
- Koster*, Mr., his tract “on the amelioration of slavery,” quoted, vi. 460
- Krishna*, the Hindoo mediatorial deity, alluded to, ix. 49
- Kuptos*, from whence derived, ix. 489; x. 193—import of the name, x. 193—the high sense in which the term was used by the Evangelists, x. 195
- L.
- Labour*, piety considered as a, iii. 29
- Ladder*, Jacob’s dream of the, noticed, vi. 69
- Lamb of God*, how slain from the foundation of the world, ii. 405—why this term was given to the Son of God, xi. 88
- Lamech*, the first polygamist, xii. 129
- Language*, how far confounded, at Babel, vi. 60—the primitive language not lost, vi. 60—not originally a human invention, vi. 61—the idea of Abbé de Bosses, noticed, vi. 61—when the Hebrew ceased to be vernacular, vi. 124—in which the Gospels were written, vi. 172—English language, how little changed since the Bible was first translated from the Greek, vi. 174
- Laodicea*, the Council of, its authoritative catalogue of canonical Scripture, ix. 185
- Lao-tseu*, a Chinese philosopher, an account of, ix. 488
- Lardner*, Dionysius, LL. D., his “Discourse on the Advantages of natural Philosophy,” &c., reviewed, vii. 392—its character, vii. 403
- , Nathaniel, D.D., on Jewish and heathen testimonies to the truth of Gospel history, ix. 168
- Last day*, the theory which defers the administration of justification to this period, stated and refuted, xi. 241, *et seq.*—character of the justification then given, xi. 244—an argument drawn from the proceedings of, in favour of justification by faith and works, examined, xi. 244, 245
- “*Last days*,” scriptural meaning of the term, iii. 271—indicated the perfection of the Gospel system, iii. 272
- Laurence*, Archbishop, his “Dissertation on the Logos of St. John,” quoted, x. 274—on the importance of the term “Logos,” as occasionally employed by St. John, x. 285

- Law*, of moral causes and effects, ii. 201—of circumstances, ii. 202—both opposed to the doctrine of a particular Providence, ii. 203—of nature, does not interfere with the exercise of a particular Providence, ii. 207—the giving of the, was a visible manifestation of God, ii. 438—is emphatically to be found in the Gospel, ii. 472—human law, unable to remedy the evils of idolatry, ii. 488—operation of, without religion, considered, ii. 488—effect of, a proof of the bondage of corruption, iii. 134—steadfastness of, illustrated, iii. 303—in what respects it is the strength of sin, iii. 431—reciprocal uses of, and the Gospel, iv. 169—and grace closely connected, iv. 171—harmonizes with every dispensation of religion to man, iv. 171; viii. 418—great principle of, taken into the Christian dispensation, iv. 172—why the tables of, were deposited in the ark, iv. 172—how far is to be re-established by the Gospel, iv. 173—furnished no means of justification before God, iv. 287—the extent of, opposed by many, iv. 359—the law of paradise, considered, vi. 31—authority of, upheld in the suffering and death of Christ, vi. 42, *et seq.*—why so solemnly proclaimed on Sinai, vi. 79—importance of, to convince of sin, viii. 236—a subject of revelation from God, ix. 10—definition of, ix. 11—opinions of the ancients on the origin of, ix. 33—original law, how preserved from corruption, ix. 38—the flood a powerful attestation to the sanctity of the, ix. 39—never entirely obliterated from the earth, ix. 75—on that ordained by angels, x. 187—remarks upon the law of God, x. 380—the moral law defined, x. 382—not first introduced, when the law of Moses was given, x. 384—definition of, x. 385; xii. 306—authority of, how upheld by the atonement of Christ, xi. 80—value of the moral law, xii. 27—way in which it is revealed to us in the Bible, xii. 28—no part of the moral law repealed in the New Testament, xii. 28—absurdity of contending that it ought to be re-enacted, xii. 30—authority of the decalogue established in the New Testament, xii. 31—in which there is a more perfect revelation of the moral law, xii. 32—in what respect the law of the land should take cognizance of marriage, xii. 132—why the Jewish religion is called “the law,” xii. 305
- Law*, ceremonial, two-fold efficacy of, iii. 113—terrible manner in which it was given, iii. 401—a typical institution, iv. 507; vi. 86—important truths taught by the, vi. 88—uninspired Jewish writers, opinion of, respecting, vi. 89—illustrated in the Epistle to the Hebrews, vi. 307—the abolition of, by Jesus Christ, viii. 530—of what typical, xi. 101, *et seq.*—the spirituality of, how far comprehended by the Jews, xi. 134—when repealed, xii. 29
- , Edmund, D.D., his “Inquiry into the Ideas of Space,” &c. referred to, ix. 459, 510
- , Rev. W., defective character of his writings, v. 14; vii. 419—as an expositor, noticed, viii. 73
- Lawrence*, William, F.R.S., on the theory of life, alluded to, ix. 477, 478
- Lawson*, Rev. George, on the nature of the Deity, ix. 369—his *Theo-politica*, quoted, ix. 461—on the unity of God, ix. 462—on the procession of the Holy Spirit, x. 360—on

- the scriptural doctrine of justification, xi. 175, 176—on justifying faith, xi. 219, 220—on good works, how far excellent, xi. 246
- Lawyers*, among the Jews, who they were, vi. 190
- Lay delegation*, in the Methodist Conference, considered, vii. 159
- *preaching*, Mr. Wesley's scruples concerning, v. 95—employs Thomas Maxfield, v. 95—defence of, v. 95—vast importance of, vii. 284, *et seq.*—evil arising from prejudices against the practice, vii. 285—propriety of, vii. 286—evils to be guarded against in the employment of, vii. 287, *et seq.*
- Le Clerc*, on the offering of Abel, xi. 120
- Leaders'-Meeting*, powers of the ministry not divided with, vii. 97—duties of a, vii. 97
- Learning*, important to a Christian Minister, ii. 181, *et seq.*—how it should be used, ii. 184—insufficiency of, in a Minister, if he be destitute of other qualifications, iii. 96—danger of, in a church, when separated from piety, vii. 184
- Leeds*, disputes in the Methodist societies there, vii. 104
- Legerdemain*, much cultivated by the pagan Priesthood, vi. 77—how far concerned in the feats of the magicians of Egypt, ix. 217
- Legislation*, unable to procure real happiness, ii. 324
- Legislative justice*, defined, x. 97
- Leibnitz*, Godfrey W., view of, on the doctrine of the resurrection, xii. 25
- Leighton*, Archbishop, his account of the Church at the Reformation, v. 62
- Leland*, John, D.D., on the term "natural religion," ix. 24—on the accordance of some of the opinions of Plato with the Mosaic records, ix. 35—on the transmission of the true religion, ix. 40—on the mysteries of Heathenism, ix. 92—and on the ideas of pagan philosophers respecting the creation, ix. 377
- Leslie*, Charles, M.A., on the impossibility of forgery in the Pentateuch, ix. 152, *et seq.*; xii. 335, *et seq.*—his four rules for ascertaining the truth of matter of fact, ix. 161; xii. 339—application of these rules to Gospel history, ix. 162, *et seq.*; xii. 339—and to the legends of Mahometanism and Paganism, ix. 162—on the marks of a faithful and exact testimony, ix. 196
- Lessey*, Rev. Theophilus, his "Sermons on the Priesthood of Christ," reviewed, viii. 116—120—importance of the subject, viii. 116—its practical use, viii. 119
- Letters*, Mr. Watson to the Rev. Jonathan Edmondson, i. 64, 195, 547—to Mr. Faulkner, jun., i. 66, 84—to Mr. Thomas Faulkner, i. 68—to Mr. John Faulkner, i. 70, 93—to Mr. A. Watkinson, i. 110, 111, 127, 130, 153—to his dying father, i. 121—to Mr. Makinson, i. 123, 125, 153—to Mr. Walton, i. 172, 174, 179, 243, 298, 333, 335, 349, 365, 366, 377—to W. C. Ellis, Esq., i. 195, 219, 355, 359, 364, 428, 438—to Mr. Garbutt, i. 196, 199, 291, 407—to Miss M. Smith, i. 267—to the Rev. William Goy, i. 308—to his daughter, i. 337, 390, 394—to the Rev. Robert Young, i. 339, 413—to Mrs. Watson, i. 341, 434, 437, 445–450, 565—to the Rev. Elijah Hoole, i. 357, 400—to the Rev. Dr. M'Allum, i. 370—to the Rev. Thomas Jackson, i. 478, 481—to Mr. James Nichols, i. 482—to the Rev. John Hannah, i. 489—to the Rev. Dr. Emory, i. 514—to the Rev. William Shaw, i. 571, 572—a circular to the Wes-

- leyan Missionaries, i. 575-579  
 —to Mr. Benjamin Blaine, i. 581—to Thomas F. Buxton, Esq., M.P., i. 590—from the Rev. John Wesley to Robert Young, v. 137—from the Commissioners of Excise to Mr. Wesley, v. 246—Mr. Wesley's reply, v. 247—from Mr. Wesley to a nobleman, v. 251—to the American Societies, v. 262—and to William Wilberforce, Esq., M.P., vii. 436  
*Letters of the alphabet*, Warburton's theory of the origin of, viii. 169—the controversy respecting the, viii. 170—the invention of the Cherokee alphabet, viii. 170—Marquess Spineto's opinion respecting the antiquity of, examined, viii. 171, *et seq.*  
*Levitical dispensation*, of what typical, xi. 101, *et seq.*  
*Liberality*, law of, in the exercise of charity, ii. 348; xii. 106—urged from a consideration of the value of the soul, ii. 417  
*Liberty*, glorious, of the children of God, described, iii. 135—moral liberty, defined, xi. 487—one of the natural rights of man, xii. 109—the voluntary surrender of, considered, xii. 122—liberty of conscience, xii. 123  
 — *of God*, character of the, x. 49—allied to his immutability, x. 48—the actions of God are the result of liberty and choice, x. 49  
 — *of the press*, an invaluable privilege of Britain, vi. 380—constitutional reply of Lord Hawkesbury to the French Minister concerning the, vi. 381  
*Life*, the natural love of, ii. 260—the shortness of, urges quickness in all we do, ii. 344—affecting representation of its brevity, ii. 345—short as it is, important work may be done, ii. 346—the great end of, iii. 3, 16; viii. 424—of the righteous prolonged, in mercy to others, iii. 9—and also to himself, iii. 9—how the Christian is the Lord's in life, iii. 10—the great period for the attainment of holiness iii. 11—a great and mysterious phenomenon, vi. 28—Dr. Good's description of, vi. 28—further evidence than the word of God of an immaterial principle in man, vi. 28—animal, intellectual, and spiritual, described, vi. 349—the gift of God, viii. 413, *et seq.*—the scripture representation of, viii. 414—various kinds of, specified, viii. 415—the numerous enjoyments of, viii. 416—capability of knowing God during life, considered, viii. 418—a scene of moral discipline, viii. 420—connexion of, with another state of being, viii. 422—the way in which life is made a blessing to man, viii. 425—human life, little regarded among the Heathen, ix. 76; xii. 314—of man, how affected by the fall, ix. 287—definition of the term, ix. 376—Bichat's theory of life, examined, ix. 476, *et seq.*; and Cuvier's, ix. 478—the question answered, "What is life?" ix. 479, 480—a natural right of man, xii. 109—when life may lawfully be hazarded, xii. 115—nature and evil of suicide, xii. 115, *et seq.*—how valued under the Mosaic dispensation, xii. 117—is not disposable at the option of man, xii. 121  
*Life in Christ*, meaning of the phrase, iv. 90—a mark of essential divinity, iv. 90—Christ the source of life in all, iv. 90—implies the life of man's justification, iv. 91; and salvation, iv. 93-95  
*Light of knowledge*, importance of, to man, ii. 243—a term used to represent the eternal state of the blessed, iii. 157—

- emblematical of holiness, iii. 157; of gladness, iii. 158; and of knowledge, iii. 159; iv. 208—why persevering piety is compared to light, iii. 261, *et seq.*—of the intellect, from God, iii. 449—in what respect it is an emblem of the Gospel, iv. 214—the change from darkness to, defined, iv. 408—an expressive figure of the Saviour, iv. 431—the armour of, described, iv. 432, *et seq.*—the creation of, before that of the sun, noticed, vi. 27; ix. 348—an emblem of good, viii. 490—on the creation of, ix. 348
- Lightfoot, John, D.D.**, on the baptism of Jewish proselytes, x. 368; xii. 247—on the officers of the Jewish synagogue, xii. 175
- Limborch, Philip, D.D.**, his views of the doctrine of original sin, referred to, x. 479
- Lindsey, Rev. Theophilus**, his refutation of the Arian hypothesis on the term “Angel of the Lord,” x. 168—his view of the phrase, x. 170—his attempt to evade the force of Stephen’s prayer, noticed, x. 318
- Lingard, John, D.D.**, character of, as an historian, vii. 447
- Linnaeus**, degrading effects of his arbitrary classification, x. 53
- Liturgy**, observations on the Liturgy of the English Church, i. 319—a remarkable sentiment in that of the Jews, noticed, iii. 375—how far an obligatory Liturgy may minister to the purity of a church, vii. 181—irregular mode of reading the, condemned, viii. 286—Liturgies, when censurable, xii. 73—objections to the use of, considered, xii. 74—the rejection of, absurd and unscriptural, xii. 75—antiquity of forms of prayer alluded to, xii. 75—the practice of the primitive church in favour of Liturgies, xii. 76—public Liturgies, objections to the use of, examined, xii. 77—absurdities into which the indiscriminate advocates of Liturgies have fallen, xii. 78. See *Forms of Prayer*.
- Lloyd, Rev. David**, his “*Horæ Theologicæ*,” referred to, ix. 308
- Local jurisdictions in Methodism**, incompetency of, vii. 101
- Locke, John**, his definition of the term “believing,” vii. 58—on the use of reason in matters of revelation, vii. 59—on moral agency, ix. 5—on man’s inaptitude for close reasoning and reflection, ix. 20—on the unauthorized character of human opinion, ix. 21—on the weakness of human reason, ix. 25—on the evidence of miracles, ix. 117—on the argument *à priori* and *à posteriori*, ix. 387—the absurdity of his notion of a social compact originating government, xii. 152—on the self-sufficiency of philosophy, xii. 311
- Logic**, correspondence respecting the study of, i. 153
- Logos**, remarks on the use of the term, viii. 62, *et seq.*—the expression not borrowed from the Platonic sects, viii. 64; x. 267—is called “God,” in the highest sense, x. 204—much scrutinized by the enemies of the faith, x. 205—from whence the term was drawn, x. 267—scripture testimonies of the use of the title, x. 268, *et seq.*—frequently adopted by the ancients, x. 269—and by the Targumists, x. 269—illustrated from the Old Testament, x. 270, *et seq.*—spoken of as Mediator, x. 271; as making atonement, x. 271; as Redeemer, x. 271; as only begotten, x. 272—the Logos of Philo and Plato, considered, x. 275, *et seq.*—why this term is not generally applied to our Saviour in the

- Gospel, x. 279—why this term was occasionally used by St. John, x. 280, *et seq.*—was no fanciful phrase, x. 284—the argument from St. John's use of the word, irresistible, x. 284—divinity of the term, x. 286
- Loins*, girt with truth, explained, iv. 433
- Lollards*, the origin of the, vii. 460
- London Corresponding Society*, a revolutionary political institution, vi. 374
- London south Circuit*, address to the Trustees, &c., of the, vii. 89—125—general tranquillity of, vii. 90—errors into which it had fallen, vii. 90, 91—sought to establish its own independency, vii. 107—denied the right of Conference interference, vii. 108, *et seq.*—inevitable consequences of such a step, vii. 110—its unconstitutional character, vii. 112, *et seq.*
- Longinus*, his allusion to Moses, ix. 150; xii. 333
- Longsuffering of God*, how displayed toward man, iii. 364, 365—a corrupt perversion of the, iii. 365
- Lord*, why this name is frequently printed in capital letters, vi. 31—an important title of Jesus Christ, x. 194—an indisputable proof of divinity, x. 194, *et seq.*—not used merely as a term of human courtesy, x. 194, *et seq.*
- *of Hosts*, an important title of Christ, x. 218
- *of the temple*, an emphatic title given to Christ, illustrated, x. 175–178
- Lord's prayer*, on the substitution of *who for which* in the, i. 155–157—was intended by our Lord to be used as a form of prayer, xii. 76. See *Forms of Prayer, Liturgy.*
- *supper*, See *Eucharist.*
- Lot*, Canaan divided among the Israelites by, alluded to, iii. 31
- of the various Israelites, divinely determined, iii. 32
- Louis XIV.*, advanced the spread of infidelity in France, iv. 249
- Love*, a principle peculiar to Christianity, ii. 82—importance of charity in a Christian Minister, ii. 169—its source, ii. 170—its nature, ii. 171, *et seq.*—disinterested and without partiality, ii. 172—generous, ii. 173—universal, ii. 174—condescending, ii. 175—careful and unwearied, ii. 176—the mightiest energy of the Gospel, ii. 309—a moral effect of the doctrine of the cross, iii. 64—of Christ, a mark of a right state of the heart, iii. 151—of the members of the church, a Christian duty, iii. 153—how far man resembles God in, iii. 294—a blessing flowing from the death of Christ, iii. 315—durability of, iv. 393—ordinary, in contrast with that which is divine, iv. 537—love to God, foundation of, viii. 252, *et seq.*—privileges of those who love God, described, viii. 455, *et seq.*—character of those who love God, viii. 455—a reciprocal duty of the married state, xii. 134—a duty of children to parents, xii. 137; and of parents to children, xii. 140
- *of Christ*, it “passeth knowledge,” explained, iv. 532—is beyond conception and expression, iv. 533—displayed in the care which marks his administration, iv. 535—in the blessings granted to man, iv. 536—is the love of an infinite nature, iv. 537—how it is known, iv. 538—to be recognised in our meditations, iv. 538—is adapted to our condition, iv. 539—is experienced in the heart, iv. 539—exemplified in our practical conduct, iv. 540—exhibits the true power of Christianity, viii. 547—annihilated by the doctrine

- of the Socinians and Arians, x. 123, *et seq.*, 127
- Love to Christ*, reasons for, iv. 450 ; his supreme excellency, iv. 450 ; his great work of redemption, iv. 451 ; and from the benefits he imparts, iv. 453—the true character of evangelical obedience, iv. 453—the instruments of holy attainment, iv. 454—the antagonist of the love of the world, iv. 455—is the root of all charity to man, iv. 456—it removes the terrors from futurity, iv. 456—general effects of, viii. 410—character of, changed on the Socinian scheme, x. 127
- of God*, declared as belonging to the divine nature, iii. 294—in seeking man's recovery, a proof of longsuffering, iii. 365—shown in his not willingly afflicting man, iv. 55—properties of, viii. 429—harmonizes with the doctrine of a propitiatory sacrifice, xi. 41—is impugned by the doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation, xi. 350
- to God*, foundation of, viii. 252, *et seq.*—a duty which men owe to God, xii. 45—the principle on which it is founded, xii. 45—nature of the affection, xii. 45—influence of, on the conduct of men, xii. 46
- of our neighbour*, nature of this affection, xii. 104—how to be expressed, xii. 105—rule of its exercise, xii. 106—is the opposite of selfishness, xii. 106
- Low Countries*, state of religion in the, in the time of Arminius, vii. 484
- Lowth*, Robert, D.D., on the term "sheol," viii. 289—his account of the Sibylline verses, ix. 51—on the phrase "everlasting Father," x. 289—on the vicarious character of the sufferings of Christ, xi. 35
- Lucian*, on Syrian traditions respecting the deluge, ix. 50—his reference to Jesus Christ, alluded to, ix. 168
- Ludovicus de Dieu*, on the character of Christ as "King of Israel," x. 219—on the title "Son of God," x. 229
- Luke*, when his Gospel was written, vi. 172—its peculiar character, vi. 172—the man whose praise was in all the churches, vi. 275
- Luther*, Martin, views of philosophy concerning his reformation, ii. 217—a remarkable saying of, noticed, ii. 447—an anecdote of, iv. 39—his preface to the Epistle to the Romans, noticed, v. 53—also to the Galatians, v. 54, 223—incautious character of the latter book, v. 84—on the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, v. 404 ; xi. 268—his principles contemned by the modern Divines of Germany, vii. 176—favoured the dogmas of Augustine, vii. 480—character of his music, viii. 325—on the phrase, "Sin is covered," xi. 192—on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 208—his recovery from the Augustinian error, noticed, xi. 417—his view of Episcopacy, xii. 180—was held in bondage on the subject of the eucharist, xii. 290
- Lutheran Church*, held the doctrine of justification by faith alone, xi. 221—was settled in the doctrine of universal redemption, xi. 417 ; and on the nature of baptism, xii. 223
- Λυτρον*, explained, xi. 51
- Lycurgus*, immoral tendency of some of the laws of, ix. 79
- Lydia*, baptism of the house of, considered, xii. 260
- Lying*, lax views of the evil of, entertained by ancient philosophers, ix. 80
- Lyttelton*, Lord, his "Dialogues of the dead," noticed, v. 222



## M.

- Maccabees*, patriotism of the, vi. 120, 128—the Books of the, characterized, vi. 128
- M'Crie*, Thomas, D.D., his "History of the Progress and Suppression of the Reformation in Spain," &c., viii. 80–84
- Macedonius*, an ancient heretic, alluded to, xii. 200
- Macknight*, James, D.D., on the final triumph of Christ, viii. 296—on the pretended heathen miracles, ix. 232—on the feats of the magicians of Egypt, ix. 237—an error into which he has fallen, respecting the speaking of the Son, x. 183—on the phrase, "Thou art my beloved Son," x. 239—on the two natures of Christ, x. 247—on the superiority of Christ over the angels, x. 249—on the eternity of Christ, x. 290—and on the passage where the Son is said not to know the day of judgment, x. 297
- MacLaine*, Archibald, D.D., remarks of, on the middle scheme, called "Baxterianism," xi. 458
- Maclaurin*, his "Essay on the Prophecies," quoted, x. 226
- M'Nicol*, Rev. David, his "Sermon on Divine Providence illustrated in the Ordination of Civil Government," reviewed, vii. 511–515—its excellency, vii. 513—the subject of resistance to government in extreme cases, considered, vii. 514
- "*Made perfect*," meaning of the phrase, iv. 426
- Magee*, Archbishop, criticism of, on the term "sheol," viii. 289—on the Socinian interpretation of "ascending into" and "coming down from heaven," x. 154—on the passage respecting the Jews tempting Christ in the wilderness, referred to, x. 182—on the title of Christ, "God blessed for ever," x. 215, 217—on the fall of man, x. 405—on the term "atonement," xi. 94—on the excellency of Abel's offering, xi. 121—and on the sacrifices of Cain and Abel, xi. 132
- Magi*, the history and character of the, vi. 220—paid the first adoration to the Messiah, vi. 221—the Persian Magi, described, viii. 479—how they became acquainted with the true religion, viii. 484—corruption of the Magian doctrine, ix. 54—influence of the captivity on the corrupted religion of, ix. 55
- Magicians, of Egypt*, how they imitated the signs of Moses, vi. 77; xii. 361—were discomfited, vi. 77; xii. 361—nature of their efforts, considered, ix. 215, *et seq.*—the object of, ix. 216—the enchantments of, ix. 216—how far their feats the result of legerdemain, ix. 217—they wrought no miracle, ix. 225—Farmer's observations on, ix. 236, *et seq.*
- Mahomet*, plans he pursued in the establishment of his religion, vii. 364—cause of his success, vii. 365—his assistants in the formation of the Koran, vii. 383—wrought no miracles, ix. 162—contrasted with the Apostles of Christ, ix. 320
- Mahometanism*, character of its followers, ii. 84—is enmity against God, ii. 306—attempts to introduce the Gospel in the midst of, a work of faith, ii. 362—enfeebled condition of, in the east, vii. 359—its character as a system of religion, vii. 360—paralleled with Christianity, vii. 361, *et seq.*—wildness of the contrast, vii. 363—cause of its prosperity, vii. 365—state of the world at its approach, vii. 369—cannot legitimately be paralleled with Christianity, vii. 372; xii. 359—withering influence of, on the arts and learning, vii. 386

- its opposing influence to the progress of the Gospel, vii. 389, 390—Leslie's rules, applied to the legends of, ix. 162
- Maimonides*, his disqualifications to write on the laws of Moses, noticed, vii. 517—his perplexity in endeavouring to discover a design in the giving of the law, vii. 518—views the reasons of the law, as moral and political, vii. 519—defects of this conclusion, vii. 520—in defence of it, adduces the *Zabii*, vii. 521—his imperfect views of the Mosaic dispensation, vii. 523; of the rite of circumcision, vii. 523; of the holy places, vii. 524; and of sacrifices, vii. 524—on the word "*Jehovah*," x. 136—on the signification of the word "*Memra*," x. 274—on the doctrine of the resurrection, xii. 23—on the officers of the synagogue, xii. 175—on the Jewish baptism of proselytes, xii. 246
- Majesty of Christ*, displayed by his miracles, ii. 227—majesty of his Gospel, ii. 308—in his regal office, viii. 536
- of God*, no mercy expected from a mere contemplation of the, iii. 355
- Malachi*, character of his prophecy, vi. 119, 168—chronological order of his prediction, vi. 168—condemned the practice of polygamy, xii. 130
- Malice*, fearfully encouraged, among the ancients, ix. 78; xii. 315
- Malta*, why Great Britain refused to evacuate, according to the treaty of Amiens, vi. 382, 383—how far this island is valuable to England, vi. 383
- Man*, in what respect he is magnified by God, ii. 66, *et seq.*—by the gift of an intellectual nature, ii. 67—by the variety and kind of pleasures of which he is capable, ii. 68—immortality a proof of his greatness, ii. 73—he is magnified by the conduct of God toward him as a sinner, ii. 73; and his recovery by Christ, ii. 74—the folly and moral degradation of man, noticed, ii. 79—his obligations to promote the benefit of his fellow-men, ii. 84—his character duly estimated, ii. 85, 91—foundation of the human fraternity, ii. 89—how degraded by a brutal philosophy, ii. 90—in what respects man is to be honoured, ii. 91—how God is to be honoured in man, ii. 133, 134—his aversion to scripture truth, stated, ii. 211—dignity of, in what it consists, ii. 241—in what respect he is made for the Son, ii. 293—how the work of redemption operates upon, ii. 294—duty of, as being made for the Son, ii. 300—effects of the Gospel upon him, ii. 333—mysterious way in which his conversion is sometimes effected, ii. 364—a standing rule of divine government, that man is helped by man, ii. 491; iii. 460—why made dependent upon man, iii. 13—his expulsion from the garden of Eden, iii. 70—not excluded from hope, iii. 70—fallen, destitute of the presence of God, iii. 129—how his heart becomes a temple of God, iii. 130—evils of the mortality of man, iii. 134—the bondage to which he is exposed, iii. 134, 135—"groans of the creature," a term applied to fallen man, iii. 136—feels misery more acutely than any other creature, iii. 137—his desires carried beyond present enjoyments, iii. 137—is displacant with vices in which he indulges, iii. 137—struggles much against sickness and death, iii. 137—an inferior being in creation, iii. 321—mysteries in the history of, known only to God, iii. 324—the re-

velation of, vouchsafed, what, iii. 331—his frailty considered, iii. 347—his general indifference to his own actions, iii. 365—how he perverts the doctrine of the longsuffering of God, iii. 366—how he neglects the day of his visitation, iv. 10—prophetic description of man convicted of sin, iv. 150—and pardoned, iv. 152—his guilt implied by the Gospel, iv. 173—moral condition of, revealed by Christ, iv. 189—eminently the subject of divine government, iv. 242, 284—appearance of a, in Ezekiel's vision, explained, iv. 270—opposes the extent of divine law, iv. 359—his dependent condition, vi. 6—not an insignificant creature in the sight of God, vi. 24—the account of his creation different from that of other beings, vi. 27—in his nature there is a liability to sin, vi. 33—though finite, not always liable to sin, vi. 34—his deplorable state through sin, vi. 41—physical varieties of, considered, vi. 51—his insufficiency the ground of religion, vi. 341—awful state of man, unregenerate, vi. 343—the only being capable of religion, viii. 418—the low estimate of, by infidelity, noticed, viii. 424—efforts of man needful to his own salvation, viii. 461—moral agency of, defended, ix. 37, *et seq.*; x. 417—the scripture character of, ix. 284—comparative insignificance of, no argument against revelation, ix. 334—his moral connexion with universal intelligence, ix. 338—conduct of God towards, ix. 365—the law under which he is placed, x. 382—his primitive state considered, x. 385, *et seq.*—grand cause of the creation of, x. 399—his fall, considered, x. 400—his probationary state, alluded to, x. 416

—the original prohibition imposed upon him, examined, x. 422—how reduced by the fall, x. 433—state in which he is placed by his federal connexion with Adam, x. 446—nature of his captivity to the devil, xi. 56—on the variety of colour, &c., in man, xii. 370  
*Man of sin*, applicable only to the Church of Rome, vi. 300—302  
*Man-stealing*, a crime of the greatest magnitude, xii. 110  
*Manichees*, the heresy of, x. 82—their account of the origin of evil, x. 82—some of the notions of, derived from a corrupted tradition of the fall, x. 413—held several tenets peculiar to Calvinism, xi. 416  
“*Manifestation of the sons of God*,” meaning of the phrase, iii. 133  
*Manna*, the fall of, ix. 207, *et seq.*; xii. 322—the double quantity which fell on the sixth day, viii. 146; xii. 94  
*Mant*, Bishop, his Commentary quoted, on the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, xi. 256  
*Mantell*, Gid., Esq., F.G.S., on the duration of the primitive “days,” ix. 342—on the period of creation, ix. 343  
*Manuscripts*, original, of the Gospels, vi. 172—various readings discovered in, alluded to, vi. 173; ix. 193—their number and nature, vi. 173; ix. 193; xii. 348—proof derived from, of the preservation of Scripture, ix. 189; xii. 346  
*Marcionites*, denied the doctrine of the resurrection, xii. 20  
*Mark*, when his Gospel was written, vi. 172—its peculiar character, vi. 172  
*Marriage*, influence of, on the domestic habits of the West Indian negroes, ii. 113, 114—why our Lord founded many parables on the notion of a marriage, vi. 183—benefits of, in civil society; vi. 438; xii.

- 128—almost entirely neglected among the negroes, vi. 438; xii. 128—testimonies of Missionaries on the subject of, vi. 441, *et seq.*—the rite of, how far performed by Missionaries in the colonies of Britain, vi. 483—ground of the indissolubility of, x. 406—foundation of the union, xii. 127—not incumbent on every one, xii. 128—the intent of marriage, xii. 128—polygamy not directly countenanced under the Mosaic law, xii. 129—originally consisted in the union of two only, xii. 129—the Jews never lost sight of the primitive law of, xii. 130—natural confirmation of the original law of, xii. 130—intended to prevent polygamy, xii. 129; and fornication, xii. 131—the question whether it be a civil or religious contract, considered, xii. 131—by whom celebrated among the Jews, xii. 132—the beneficial custom of assigning its celebration to Ministers of religion, xii. 133—not exclusively to those of the established Church, xii. 133—the reciprocal duties of marriage, considered, xii. 134, *et seq.*—duties of children to parents, on the subject of marriage, defined, xii. 139—exceptions to this rule, when justifiable, xii. 140—the folly of the Papists in recognising it as a sacrament, xii. 215
- Marriage ceremonies* of the Jews, alluded to, iv. 98
- Marryatt*, Mr., his gross misrepresentations of the Wesleyan Missions and Missionaries, refuted, vi. 430, *et seq.*, 446, 449—his assertion that the West India colonists have not been indifferent to the cause of Christianity, disproved, vi. 450, *et seq.*—his statements concerning the tolerant character of the colonists, proved false, vi. 471, *et seq.*—accuses the Rev. T. Talboys of exciting the negroes to revolt, vi. 477—his accusations investigated and refuted, vi. 478, *et seq.*—his charges sufficiently refuted by the West India planters, vi. 504, *et seq.*—futile influence of his menaces and calumny, vi. 529—his comparison between the political tendency of Popery and Methodism, vi. 530
- Marsh*, Bishop, on the style of the Scriptures, ix. 317
- Martial*, allusion of, to Jesus Christ, ix. 167
- Martin*, Rev. Robert, “on the Doctrine of the eternal Sonship of Christ,” quoted, x. 253
- Maprupia*, explained, v. 171
- Martyn*, Rev. Henry, notice of, viii. 214
- Martyr*, Peter, quoted, on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 209
- Mary*, the sister of Lazarus, anoints the feet of Jesus, vi. 235
- Mary Magdalene*, her history, vi. 192—her moral conduct defended, vi. 192
- Masters*, salutary effect of religion on, xii. 145—are to be honoured by their servants, xii. 145—duties of masters and servants reciprocal, xii. 146—are to render to their servants that which is “just” and “equal,” explained, xii. 147—the religious duties of masters, defined, xii. 147, *et seq.*—should instruct, xii. 148—and use their influence to promote the religious benefit of their servants, xii. 149
- Μαθημα*, explained, vii. 497
- Matter*, the eternity of, held by the ancient philosophers, vi. 18; ix. 27, 63, 377—great evil of this doctrine, ix. 64—its absurdity, ix. 446—its origin, ix. 447—great mass of, wholly unintelligent, ix. 472—inconsistent with mental phenomena

- na, ix. 481, *et seq.*—on the word “matter,” ix. 483
- Matthew*, when his Gospel was written, vi. 172—its peculiar character, vi. 172—was a kind of custom-house officer, vi. 190
- Maundrell*, Henry, M. A., his account of the river Jordan, xii. 276
- Maurice*, his “History of Hindostan,” alluded to, ix. 48—referred to, on the prevalence of human sacrifice, ix. 83
- Maxfield*, Thomas, the first lay-preacher among the Methodists, v. 95—approved of by the mother of Mr. Wesley, v. 95.
- Maximus*, Tyrius, his lax views of the evil of lying, ix. 80
- Meals*, the Jewish mode of sitting at, vi. 193
- Means of grace*, danger of placing too much dependence on, vi. 352
- “*Meat that perisheth*,” meaning of the phrase, iii. 317
- Mede*, Joseph, on the confusion of tongues, vi. 60
- Mediator*, office of Christ as, considered, ii. 259—nature and character of the work, iv. 428—the way to God laid open, through him, vi. 355. See *Christ*.
- Meditation*, objects of, considered, ii. 254—unfolds the volume of nature, ii. 255—discloses the principles and ends of divine government, ii. 256—reveals the dispensation of grace, ii. 258—draws aside the veil of mortality, ii. 260—conduces to a knowledge of the heart, ii. 262—to a just estimate of the world, ii. 263—is promotive of holiness, ii. 264—leads to union with God, ii. 265—prepares for heaven, ii. 266—is practicable to all, ii. 267—evils of the neglect of this duty, noticed, ii. 267
- Mediterranean*, Richardson’s travels along the, noticed, vii. 336, *et seq.*—general characteristic of travellers there, vii. 337
- Meekness*, an indispensable qualification of a Christian Missionary, i. 258—defined, xii. 7
- Melancthon*, Philip, favoured the doctrine of conditionalelection, vii. 480—and of the witness of the Spirit, viii. 242—on the anger of God, x. 32—on the doctrine of justification by faith alone, xi. 220—his view of the peculiarities of Calvinism, xi. 416
- Melchizedek*, a type of Christ, iii. 441; vi. 67—who he was, vi. 66—character of his priesthood, vi. 310—in what there is a conformity between his priesthood, and that of Christ, vi. 310—his character and that of his subjects, ix. 40
- Memnon*, the celebrated statue of, vii. 347
- Memra*, of the Chaldee paraphrasts, described, x. 270, *et seq.*—Dr. J. Pye Smith and Maimonides on the word, x. 273, 274. See *Logos*.
- Menander*, his lax views of the evil of lying, ix. 80
- Mental faculties*, an illustration of design in the works of God, ix. 419, *et seq.*
- Menu*, institutes of, contain a tradition concerning creation, vi. 48; ix. 47
- Mercy*, merciful character of the Gospel, considered, iii. 498—connected with the regal power of Christ, viii. 532
- *of God*, defined, iii. 77; x. 91—in favour of the salvation of infants, iii. 77—in the Gospel, immutable, iii. 349—not a distinct attribute, iii. 357—displayed more among men than judgment, iv. 55—exercised in strict harmony with divine justice, iv. 176—manifested even in the misery of man, iv. 271—man has no right to presume upon it, ix. 15—noticed, ix. 368—how exercised, x. 59—shown in the

- happiness he prepared for man, x. 59. See *Goodness of God*.
- Mercy-seat*, why termed by St. Paul the throne of grace, iv. 174—import of it being sprinkled with blood, iv. 175—its connexion with the tables of the law, illustrated, iv. 171—176—was wanting in the second temple, vi. 120—in what respect Jesus Christ is said to be our, xi. 39, 40
- Merit*, institutions of faith often converted into a plea of, iv. 362—scriptural meaning of the term, v. 233, 234—how understood by the Methodists, v. 234, 235—of good works, when this doctrine was introduced into the Church of Rome, vii. 456
- Messiah*, character of the, promised to the Jews, ii. 272—the efficiency of the religious system which he introduced, iii. 272—the days of, the completion of the purposes of God, iii. 273—God's promise to, raises him out of his habitation, iii. 478—how he should bless the nations of the earth, iii. 491—high expectations of Prophets concerning, iv. 206—character of prophecies concerning the, iv. 207—a term of different import to the "Son of God," vii. 22; x. 223—Christ not condemned by Jews because he assumed this title, vii. 27—the title does not necessarily include divinity, vii. 36—name Jehovah, given to the, x. 190—import of the argument which gives the name to the Messiah, x. 192—not blasphemy to assume the title of, x. 223—how the term "Son of God" came to be applied to the, x. 235
- Metaphor*, as distinguished from analogy, vii. 312—character of the metaphorical language of the Scripture, viii. 72
- Methodism*, influence of, on the morals and welfare of the nation, i. 320—agitation in the Methodist societies on the subject of discipline, noticed, i. 471—"Address of the London South Circuit," on the introduction of certain innovations, i. 471—leading principles of this "Address," exposed, i. 472—designs of a certain faction at Leeds, fully exhibited by the Rev. D. Isaac, i. 476—character of the adversaries by whom Methodism has been misrepresented, i. 538—Methodism not influenced by a party-spirit, ii. 416—state of the Clergy at the rise of, v. 63—statement of the doctrinal views of, v. 80—ecclesiastical irregularity of, considered, v. 96—99—character of Cornish Methodism, v. 116—introduction of, into Dublin, v. 153, 154—prosperous state of, v. 156—labours of the Preachers, noticed, v. 156—primitive Circuits of, v. 195—perpetuity of, provided for, subsequent to the death of Mr. Wesley, v. 214—progress of, in America, v. 217, 261—defence of the power exercised by Mr. Wesley in, v. 225—in the Isle of Man, v. 247—retrospect of the progress of, v. 290—obligations of, to the Rev. Charles Wesley, v. 296—why dissent is not formally professed by, v. 333—general feeling of, toward the established Church, v. 333, 334—true cause of her separation from the Church of England, v. 334—the sacramental controversy alluded to, v. 335—reasons why the Methodists cannot revert back and join the Church, v. 336—beneficial tendency of, to the Church and nation, v. 336—342—individuals whom Methodism is said to have alienated from the Church, considered, v. 342—objections urged against, noticed, v. 343—antisectarianism of, v. 344—state of, at the death of Mr. Wesley, v. 347—

- the future prospects of, adverted to, v. 348—illiberal attacks upon, v. 353—irregularities of, in early days, attributed by Southey to enthusiasm, v. 389—Southey's remarks upon these extravagancies, animadverted on, v. 424—Southey's comparison between, and the Church of Rome, v. 430—is charged by him with alienating the people from the Church, v. 464, *et seq.*—Southey's list of charges against Methodism, refuted, v. 493–497—connexional character of, vii. 90—operation of this principle, vii. 91—present government of, vii. 92—checks and restraints in, vii. 92, 93—Mark Robinson's attempt to place Methodism under the control of the Clergy, vii. 132—absurdity of the scheme, vii. 132, 146, *et seq.*—primitive, as well as modern Methodism, not relished by the Church of England, vii. 147, *et seq.*—primitive Methodism, defined, vii. 148—fatal consequences of an amalgamation with the Church, vii. 149—relative position of, in regard to high Church of Englandism and Dissent, vii. 160, *et seq.*—moral capabilities of, vii. 282—peculiar genius of, vii. 417, *et seq.*—the Arminianism of, stated, vii. 421—special duty of, to exhibit the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, viii. 248—financial state of, alluded to, viii. 333, 341
- Methodists*, origin of the term, v. 11—first society of, in Oxford, v. 15—in London, v. 51—present society of, when established, v. 84—objection of, to receive the sacrament from irreligious Clergymen, vii. 140—great body of, not of the Church of England, vii. 142. See *Methodism*.
- Methodist societies*, pastoral addresses to, viii. 328–372—increase of the number of, noticed, viii. 329, 348, 356—practical piety inculcated upon, viii. 329, 361—advice to, in personal trouble, viii. 330—their duty in national troubles, viii. 330, 344—obligation of the rich to regard the poor, viii. 331—importance of fostering religious and charitable institutions, viii. 332, 343—interest of, in the finances of the Connexion, viii. 333, 341—the great principle of union in, recognised, viii. 334, 359—causes which occasionally operate against the increase of, viii. 337—state of, in Ireland, noticed, viii. 339; and in America, viii. 340, 360—advice to, on the building of chapels, viii. 343—prosperity of, in 1821, noticed, viii. 347, *et seq.*—advice to the young members of, viii. 349, 368—importance of the discipline and government of, viii. 358—exhorted to a due regard of the Sabbath, viii. 362—of the Lord's supper, viii. 362—and of class-meetings, viii. 367—advice to gratitude on a prosperous state of the country, viii. 369—and to the cultivation of knowledge, viii. 371
- Metropolitan*, origin of, in the Church, xii. 177
- Mexico*, traditions in, concerning the deluge, ix. 50—and the fall of man, x. 414
- Micah*, the chronological order of his prophecy, vi. 166—its peculiar character, vi. 166
- Michaëlis*, quoted, on the miracles of Christianity, ix. 181—on the style of the Scriptures, ix. 317—on the confession of Thomas, x. 207—on the title "Son of God," applied to Christ, x. 227—on slavery, as it existed among the Jews, xii. 111—on certain privileges of slaves under the Mosaic dispensation, xii. 112—on the celebration of marriages among the Jews, xii. 132

- Middleton*, Bishop, on the title "God," applied to Christ, x. 205—on the confession of Thomas, x. 208—on Granville Sharp's canon of criticism, x. 209—on the phrases, "God is thy throne," x. 213; and "God blessed for ever," x. 216
- , Conyers, D. D., his "Free Inquiry," &c., noticed, ix. 322
- Midnight*, why said to be the time of the coming of Christ, iv. 103
- Military triumphs*, alluded to, ii. 441—of the ancients, illustrative of the ascension of Christ, iv. 80; viii. 301—gifts received for general distribution on those occasions, iv. 81
- Milkites*, a sect dissenting from the Greek Church, described, viii. 196, *et seq.*
- Milman*, Rev. H. H., on the plagues of Egypt, vi. 76—and on the calamities witnessed by Jeremiah, vi. 149
- Milton*, John, by order of Cromwell, writes letters to the Protestant Courts on behalf of the Vaudois, vii. 461—his sonnet "On the Massacre in Piedmont," vii. 461
- Mind*, habit of, to have the Lord always before us, viii. 389, *et seq.*—remarks on the word "mind," ix. 483
- Miracle*, theological definition of, ii. 221; ix. 101, 202; xii. 319—the miracles of Christ, ii. 222, *et seq.*; xii. 323—their number and publicity an evidence of their truth, ii. 223—character of the witnesses of them, ii. 224—their nature, ii. 224—their effect on the minds of the people, ii. 225—miracles declarative of Christ's divinity, ii. 226—indicative of the majesty of the Redeemer, ii. 227—which display the compassion of Christ, ii. 228—which are intended to inculcate some important doctrine, ii. 230—and which teach the duty and necessity of faith, ii. 231—typical miracles, noticed, ii. 234—as great as that of the resurrection, of frequent occurrence, ii. 395—proof of the certainty of the knowledge of Christ, iii. 48—a seal upon the claims of Christ, iii. 308—the evidence of, does not diminish, iii. 312—of healing, an extraordinary work of the Spirit, iii. 380—why more were wrought by Christ than by the Prophets, vi. 177—the miracles of Christ were real, vi. 178—peculiar to himself, vi. 178—correctly reported, vi. 178—varied and beneficent, vi. 179—the number of Christ's miracles, adverted to, vi. 217—many definitions of the term, ix. 100, *et seq.*—moral ends of, ix. 102—possibility of, ix. 102—on the credibility of, ix. 103—a real miracle, how distinguished, ix. 104, *et seq.*; xii. 321—compared with prophecy, as evidence, ix. 124—gift of, how imparted, ix. 181—importance of, in revelation, ix. 202—the miracle of darkness in Egypt, considered, ix. 203, *et seq.*; xii. 321—on the dividing of the Red Sea, ix. 204; xii. 321—on the destruction of the first-born, ix. 204; xii. 321—on the fall of manna, ix. 206; xii. 322—miracles of Christ, considered, ix. 208, *et seq.*—the resurrection of Christ, examined, ix. 209—those attributed to false prophets, noticed, ix. 219, *et seq.*—no miracle wrought by the Magicians, ix. 225; xii. 361—no miracle can be wrought in support of falsehood, ix. 226—the pretended miracles of Heathenism, ix. 232, *et seq.*—in the desert, moral ends of, ix. 234—Van Mildert's observations on the, ix. 233–235—the working of, a divine act of Christ, x. 312—importance of a miracle



- being justly defined, xii. 319  
 —how connected with the authority of the teachers of revelation, xii. 320—the miracle of Moses's rod, noticed, xii. 321
- Miraculous conception*, unknown beyond the limits of the Holy Family till after the resurrection, i. 232—not a prominent opinion among the Jews, vii. 36
- *gifts*, defined, iv. 390  
 —errors concerning them, iv. 390, 391—the design of these powers, iv. 390, 391—church of Corinth richly endowed with them, vi. 270—were much abused, vi. 270—cessation of, in the Christian church, ix. 322—attempts to deny the existence of, ix. 322
- Misery*, the fruit of vice, ii. 76—of the ignorant man, ii. 246—of the wicked in a future state, contrasted with the happiness of the good, ii. 261—sin and misery closely connected, ii. 323—where its antidote is to be found, ii. 325—arises in a great degree from the selfishness of man, ii. 353—felt more acutely by man than by other creatures, iii. 137—of those who reject Christ's yoke, iii. 256—perpetually connected with sin, iii. 304—a feature of the present state of Heathenism, iii. 467—traced to causes independent of the will of God, iv. 55—of the damned, increased by the number, viii. 446—cause of human misery, ix. 289
- Misna*, the, described, vi. 125—by whom published, and when, vii. 27 (n)
- Missionary*, Christian, important work of a, characterized, i. 255–257—indispensable qualifications of, mentioned, i. 257–259—dangers and difficulties of, stated, i. 259–261—is the agent of the church, and demands her prayers and support, i. 261–263—instructions to Methodist Missionaries, i. 275–282—Mr. Watson's circular to, i. 575–579—is actuated by a principle of Christian devotedness, iii. 15—displays the greatest heroism, iii. 25—the great object of his labour, iv. 166—testimonies of, respecting the superstitions of the Africans, vi. 433, *et seq.*; and their awfully demoralized state, vi. 436—testimony of, on the subject of marriage, vi. 441, *et seq.*—concessions in favour of, wrung from the colonists, noticed, vi. 445, *et seq.*—testimonies of, on the habitual negligence of the established Clergy to the spiritual wants of the negro, vi. 452, *et seq.*—testimonies of, on the profanation of the Sabbath in the colonies, vi. 462—labours of, in the West Indies, considered, vi. 463, *et seq.*—the assertion that they are handsomely remunerated, refuted, vi. 467—sufferings of, under the intolerant enactments of the West Indian colonists, vi. 471, *et seq.*—testimonies of, to slaves undergoing punishment for receiving religious instruction, vi. 472, *et seq.*—how far they celebrated the rite of marriage in the colonies of Britain, vi. 483—general good conduct of the West Indian Missionaries, asserted, vi. 491, *et seq.*—the official instructions given to them, noticed, vi. 494—their testimony as to the doctrines they preached to the negroes, vi. 496; and to the effects of those doctrines on the slaves, vi. 497—moral impracticability of preaching seditious doctrines, vi. 498—their testimony to the loyalty of the converted negroes, vi. 500, *et seq.*; and their sober habits, vi. 510—causes of opposition to, in the West Indies, vi. 514—ludicrous examination of one, on a theological subject, by the Jamaica

Council, vi. 516—defended against the intolerant assertions of the Colonial Journal, vi. 520, *et seq.*—the charge of inculcating liberty and equality upon the negroes, repelled, vi. 531—course adopted by, in the evangelization of India, vii. 324

*Missionaries*, American, hazardous situation of, in Burmah, viii. 89—a singular coincidence connected with their establishment in the Sandwich Islands, viii. 102, *et seq.*

*Missionary Societies*, formation of one at Leeds, i. 136; at Halifax, i. 142; at Hull, i. 146; at Sheffield, i. 147—Mr. Montgomery's account of it, i. 147—149—diversity of opinion among the Wesleyan Ministers on these Societies, i. 163—are recommended by the Conference, i. 164—their influence on the Methodist Connexion, i. 165—account of the formation of a Missionary Society in London, i. 173—formation of the General Wesleyan Missionary Society, i. 218, 242—first Meeting of, i. 243

*Missions*, Christian, are consistent with the principles of Christianity, i. 143—exhibit Christianity assuming an offensive attitude, as well as defensive, i. 143, 144—the hand of Providence in exciting a Missionary spirit in Britain, recognised, i. 144—charity to the Heathen proved to be charity begun at home, i. 145—moral influence of, on British Christians, i. 149, 150—important objects of Missionary zeal, i. 151—ultimate success of, i. 152—Christian Missions the surest way of promoting universal peace, i. 161—motives to enlarged exertions in this cause, stated, i. 189, 190—the system of Missions is that only on which the hope of a fallen world can rest, i. 256

—are a work which, under God, belongs exclusively to the church, i. 261—263—a publication entitled “New Model for Missions,” noticed, i. 495—importance of union and co-operation in kindred Societies, i. 497—effect of Missionary operation on the civilization and moral improvement of man, i. 499—sources of encouragement to Christian Missions among West Indian negroes, considered, ii. 117—124—philosophical views concerning the progress of, ii. 217—establishment of, a day of Christ's power, ii. 311—furnish comments on the promise, “Cast thy bread,” &c., ii. 356—eminently a work of faith, ii. 362—mysterious way in which they are sometimes carried forward, ii. 365—reasons of Missionary efforts, ii. 478—are means appointed to remedy the evils of idolatry, ii. 491—eminent success of, noticed, ii. 494—stations of, in the West Indies, vi. 463—success of, grounded on the failure of Abbé Dubois's attempt, vii. 323

*Missions*, Methodist, state of, when Dr. Coke departed for India, i. 134, 135—formation of a Missionary Society in Leeds, i. 136—Mr. Watson writes an address in behalf of the Methodist Missions, i. 140—condition and prospects of, in 1816, i. 199—206—character of the Missions in the West India islands, i. 207, 208—objects of attack by certain members of the House of Commons, i. 209, 210—are defended by Mr. Watson, i. 209—214—abolition of slavery attributed to the operation of Missions, i. 208—210—confidence in the protection of a British Parliament, i. 211—213—state and prospects of the Missions in 1817, i. 220—225—formation

of a General Wesleyan Missionary Society, i. 218, 242—condition and prospects of the Missions in 1818, i. 264–266—exhausted state of the Mission fund in 1819, i. 269—appeal to the public in its behalf, i. 270—under great obligations to Sir Alexander Johnstone, Chief Justice in Ceylon, i. 271, 272—body of instructions to the Methodist Missionaries, i. 275–282—state of the Missionary Society, 1819, i. 288—importance of the South African Mission, i. 293—an alteration in the management of its affairs noticed, i. 325—prospects of the Society, 1820, i. 325—success and prospects of the Society, in 1821, i. 343–348—persecution in Barbadoes noticed, i. 378—general aspect of Missionary affairs in 1823, i. 382–386—Sir G. H. Rose's letter "On the Means and Importance of Converting the Slaves of the West Indies to Christianity," noticed, i. 383—insurrection in Demerara, i. 384—unfortunate resolutions of certain Missionaries in Jamaica, noticed, i. 398—disavowed by the general Committee, i. 399—correspondence with Colonial Secretaries, i. 399—prospects of the Missions in 1824, i. 402–405—general appearance of Missionary affairs at the close of the year 1825, i. 418–423—melancholy loss of Missionary life in the Maria mail-boat, i. 425—sketch of the Society's operations in 1826, i. 441–445—state of the Missions, 1827, i. 460—prospect of the Missions, 1828, i. 481—state of the Wesleyan Missions, 1829, i. 490–492—persecutions in Jamaica, i. 493—remarks on the persecutions experienced by Methodist Missionaries, i. 504—state of Missions in 1830, i. 525—general aspect of the Missions,

1831, i. 548—persecuting and revolutionary proceedings in Jamaica, i. 552—Methodist Missionaries clear from all participation therein, i. 559—remote cause of the insurrection, the restrictions placed upon Christian Missionaries, i. 560—resolutions of the Missionary Committee on the death of the Rev. John James, i. 586—opposition to their operations in the West Indies, considered, vi. 429—misrepresentation of Marryatt and others, refuted, vi. 430, *et seq.*—stations of, in the West Indies, vi. 463—general plan of Missionary labour there, vi. 465—success of, in those colonies, vi. 467, 468—why the Methodists have experienced more effects of colonial hostility than the Moravian Missions, vi. 489—singular inconsistency of the opposers of, vi. 511—success of, in Ceylon and India, vii. 327—obstacles to, in India, vii. 328—state of, in 1820, noticed, viii. 339—in 1821, viii. 352  
*Model*, God the, of a good man, viii. 394  
*Moir*, Earl of, his speech on the policy of the war with France, quoted, vi. 386  
*Monophysites*, tenets of, referred to, x. 344  
*Monopoly*, of the revelation of God, evils attending a, ix. 91  
*Monothelites*, tenets of, x. 344  
*Monte Video*, establishment of a school in, viii. 218  
*Montgomery*, James, Esq., his account of the first Missionary Meeting at Sheffield, i. 147–149—on hymns suitable for congregational worship, v. 298  
*Monthly Magazine*, Mr. Wesley defended against an attack inserted in the, v. 509–511  
*Moor*, Edward, F. R. S., his "Hindoo Pantheon" quoted, on the theology of the Hindoos, ix. 63—on the Hindoo doctrine of absorption, ix. 71—

- referred to, on the prevalence of human sacrifice, ix. 83—on the modern idolatry of the Hindoos, xii. 312
- Moore*, Rev. Henry, his "Life of Rev. John Wesley," noticed, v. 1; and reviewed, vii. 407—440—the ignorant view of "the Christian Guardian" respecting this work, vii. 167—his qualifications as a biographer of Mr. Wesley, vii. 410—character of the biography, vii. 411, 439—his undeviating regard to the great principles of Methodism, vii. 418—gives a just explanation of Mr. Wesley's alleged inconsistency with the Church, vii. 423, *et seq.*—his *cold* remarks respecting Dr. Coke, noticed, vii. 432—remarks on the introduction of Episcopacy into America, vii. 433, *et seq.*—his remarks on Mr. Wesley's Notes on the New Testament, vii. 437—his observations on the doctrine of Christ's descent into hell, examined, vii. 437, *et seq.*—observations on his view of the character of Mr. Wesley, vii. 438—his sarcastic remarks on Mr. Southey, vii. 438
- Morai*, of the Sandwich Islands, described, viii. 105
- Moral agency*, of the soul of man, noticed, iii. 218—moral agency, scriptural views of, iv. 245—man a moral agent, ix. 5—a moral agent defined, ix. 5—rules by which the morality of actions are determined, ix. 6—indicative of the existence of a Supreme Creator, ix. 7—the law of God, the foundation of all morality, ix. 9—moral agency of man, defended, ix. 36, *et seq.* See *Agency, Free agent*.
- *agent*, man described as such, x. 416—import of the phrase, xii. 306
- *evil*, to what attributed by ancient philosophers, ix. 65—has nothing to do with Natural Theology, and why, x. 61—views taken of, as existing in the world, x. 61—the mixed administration of the divine government, noticed, x. 72, *et seq.*—cause of the present confused state of the earth, x. 73—the existence of, how compatible with the goodness of God, x. 81, *et seq.*—on the origin of, x. 81—the result of an abuse of the freedom of the will, x. 83, *et seq.*
- Moral government*, meaning of the phrase, iv. 241; x. 379—two kinds of, noticed, iv. 284—Bishop Butler's remarks on, ix. 7—consistency of the doctrine of atonement, with the ends of, ix. 293, *et seq.*—on the wisdom displayed in the, x. 56—scheme of redemption harmonizes with, xi. 3, *et seq.*
- *liberty*, does not necessarily imply a liability to sin, x. 86
- *obligation*, remarks on the ground of, ix. 92, *et seq.*; xii. 38, *et seq.*
- *philosophy*, secrets of, known only to God, iii. 324—unable to correct human nature, iv. 387—importance of, as a science, vii. 190—the delusion in separating it from religion and the Scriptures, vii. 191—true principle of all morality stated, vii. 193—the high value of Christian morals, vii. 194—unsound principles on which many systems of are founded, xii. 33—mischievous tendency of teaching morals independent of Christianity, xii. 34, *et seq.*—the question how far the teaching of morals should be kept in connexion with religion, xii. 35—how far "moral philosophy" may be usefully cultivated, xii. 36
- *sense*, remarks upon, ix. 93
- Morality*, influence of Christian morality on the West Indian slaves, ii. 109—the inculcation

of moral duties, an important part of the work of a Christian Minister, ii. 188—not recognised where idolatry reigns, ii. 480—foundation of all morality is the will of God, ii. 480—only to be expected from the influence of divine truth, iv. 461—connected with no knowledge but that which is religious, iv. 467—in decay and ruin when infidelity prevails, iv. 468—defective way in which morality has been taught, iv. 468—great principle of, eternal, iv. 507—is advanced forward by the word of God, iv. 514—not to be separated from the Scriptures, vii. 191—the true principle of all morality, stated, vii. 193—great importance of Christian morals, vii. 194—moral truth not every where practically efficient when known, vii. 217—moral wretchedness of the country, vii. 166—the law of God the true foundation of, ix. 9—indisposition of man to true morality, ix. 20—of pagan philosophy, how to be received, ix. 63—state of, among the Heathen, ix. 75, *et seq.*; xii. 314—of the Scriptures, ix. 146—perfect system of, only found in Scripture, ix. 313, *et seq.*—distinction between a *moral* and a *positive* precept, x. 423—the idea that the doctrine of justification by faith is contrary to morality, examined, xi. 223—the morals of Christianity, considered, xii. 27, *et seq.*—absurdity of teaching morals independent of the Scriptures, xii. 33—reasons on which moral precepts rest, xii. 36—systems of casuistry and cases of conscience, noticed, xii. 37—on the ground of moral obligation, xii. 38—moral rectitude, described, xii. 40—high ground on which it is placed by Christianity, xii. 44

—close connexion of, with Christian doctrine, xii. 47  
*Moravians*, their efforts to convert the negroes, iii. 463—Mr. Wesley's description of, on the voyage to Georgia, v. 34—of great advantage to Mr. Wesley, v. 37—his separation from them, v. 81—doctrinal views entertained by them at that period, v. 82—their Missions in the West Indies equally obnoxious to the colonist as the Methodist, vi. 486—sphere of their labours in those islands, vi. 489—reason why the Wesleyan Missionaries have experienced more ill effects of colonial hostility than the Moravians, vi. 489, 490  
*More*, Mrs. Hannah, on the harmony of the sacred writers, ix. 308, *et seq.*—their unflinching fidelity, ix. 311—on the style of the Scriptures, ix. 318  
*More*, Henry, D.D., his remark on well-attested stories of apparitions, v. 346, 503—and his testimony concerning supernatural appearances, v. 500  
*More Nevochim*, of Maimonides, character of the work, vii. 516, 527  
*Morgan*, Thomas, LL.D., his objection to prophecy as a proof of revelation, examined, ix. 117, *et seq.*—his moral character, ix. 312  
*Moscow*, present condition of the city of, described, viii. 198—retreat of Napoleon from, viii. 199  
*Moses*, his appearance at the transfiguration, iii. 86—its object, considered, iii. 89—the history of, noticed, iii. 182—the peculiarities of the choice he made, iii. 183; vi. 75—the principles by which he was influenced, iii. 184—his faith respecting a future world, iii. 187—his philosophical accuracy, vi. 27—character of his narratives, vi. 68—his birth and preservation, vi. 74—his

- killing the Egyptian, considered, vi. 75—is divinely commissioned, vi. 76—his signs how imitated by the magicians, vi. 77—political institutions of, vi. 94—the book of Job ascribed to him, vi. 162—his inferiority to the Son, vi. 309—the authenticity of the books of, confirmed by the monuments of Egypt, viii. 175, *et seq.*—the covenant repeated to Moses, stated, viii. 499—antiquity of the books of, noticed, ix. 26—authenticity of Moses, associated with the truth of revelation, ix. 148, *et seq.*—impossibility of forgery in the books of, ix. 152, *et seq.*; xii. 335, *et seq.*—predictions of, a proof of his divine commission, ix. 255, *et seq.*—supposed cruel enactments of, examined, ix. 328—his chronology of the creation defended, ix. 339; xii. 367—his account of the fall stated and defended, x. 403—in what sense he is called a “redeemer,” xi. 54—contrasted with Christ in that character, xi. 54—miracles of, considered, ix. 203, *et seq.*; xii. 321, *et seq.*—his prediction concerning Christ, ix. 253; xii. 325—the Jewish apostasy, ix. 255; xii. 326—period in which Moses flourished, xii. 332—testimony of pagan writers to the existence, &c., of Moses and Christ, xii. 332
- Mosheim, J. L., D.D.*, on the original independency and subsequent union of the early churches, xii. 185
- Mother*, why the church is called “the mother of us all,” iii. 284
- Mühlenfels, L. Von, LL.D.*, his “Introductory Lecture in the University of London,” reviewed, vii. 392–406
- Munn, Rev. R., D.D.*, a Missionary to the West Indies, sent out by Bishop Porteus, his death and character, vi. 488
- Murder*, little regarded among the Heathen, ix. 76—in what the essence of the crime of, consists, x. 389; xii. 119—suicide is recognised murder in the word of God, xii. 118. See *Suicide*.
- Murray, Grace*, account of, v. 200—Mr. Wesley’s attachment to, v. 200—her marriage to Mr. Bennett, v. 200
- Musculus, Wolfgangus*, quoted, on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 209
- Mutability* of human affairs, a motive to pious exertions, ii. 357
- Myles, Rev. William*, his “Chronological History of the Methodists,” quoted, v. 259
- Mysteries of Paganism*, brief account of the, ii. 326—conjectures respecting what was taught in them, ii. 326—points of resemblance to the, in the mysteries of Christianity, ii. 326—are characterized by artifice, and are enigmatical, ii. 328—intended only for the benefit of a few, ii. 329—alluded to, viii. 33—conflicting opinions of Warburton and Leland, concerning, ix. 92
- Mystery*, in what respect Christianity is said to be a, ii. 327—character of the mystery of godliness, ii. 329—in which the works of God are carried on, noticed, ii. 363—in religion, known fully to God, iii. 326—in the revelation of God, acknowledged, iv. 145—Dr. O. Gregory on, referred to, vii. 61; ix. 333—of revelation, considered, ix. 332—import of the term, xii. 212
- Mysticism*, the great errors of, v. 47; vi. 357—prevailed among the Moravians, v. 84—how it failed to answer its anticipated end, vi. 357
- Mythology*, of Rome, its extensive influence, ii. 442—truths of Scripture found in that of Greece and Rome, accounted

for, ix. 36—tradition of the serpent in that of Hindostan and Greece, ix. 49—coincidence of the Hindoo and Greek, ix. 58—of the Indians, some of the fictions of, derived from a corrupted tradition of the fall, x. 413

## N.

*Nahum*, chronological order of his prophecy, vi. 166—its peculiar character, vi. 167

*Names*, in Scripture, purposes for which they are given, iii. 240

— *of God*, defined, ix. 363

—meaning of the term, ix. 461

—those indicating plurality, considered, x. 137

*Nantes*, Edict of, effects of the revocation of the, on the Vaudois, vii. 462

*Napoleon Bonaparte*, providentially arrested in his career of pride and blood, iv. 252—his ambitious character, vi. 375—is offended with the liberty of the British press, vi. 380—nature of the peace he was always willing to make, vi. 399—his retreat from Moscow, viii. 199; ix. 497—anecdote of, viii. 199

*Narcissus*, Archbishop of Armenia, account of an interview with, viii. 213

*Nares*, Edward, D.D., on the contradictions of Socinianism concerning the pre-existence of Christ, x. 156—on “the ‘Improved Version’ respecting Emmanuel, a title of Christ, x. 202—on the title, ‘God blessed for ever,’ x. 215, 217—on the importance of the term ‘Logos,’ as occasionally used by St. John, x. 284

*Nations*, mysterious way in which they are sometimes brought under religious influence, ii. 364—in what respect under the government of Christ, iv. 138—moral result of the mul-

tiplication of, considered, iv. 212—the persecuting and wicked, invariably punished, iv. 251—only great, as they are wise and good, iv. 513; morality of, only advanced by the truth of God, iv. 514; and preserved from error and infidelity, iv. 515; and in order and peace, iv. 517; and happiness, iv. 518—primitive nations, character of the, vi. 56—Sir William Jones, on the origin of, vi. 59—ancient manners of people, vi. 62—apparently irreconcilable conduct of the divine administration toward, x. 103—the strength and extent of the wickedness of, an argument for the doctrine of original sin, x. 457, *et seq.*—none altogether destitute of revelation, xi. 169—the election of, considered, xi. 305

*Natural evil*, to what attributed by the ancient philosophers, ix. 65—inflicted by the Most High, viii. 493—views of, as existing in the world, x. 61

— *religion*, affords no hope of pardon to the guilty, ii. 322—no distinction between this and revealed religion, noticed by St. Paul, iv. 132—how this phrase became introduced into theological language, vi. 7—principles on which writers on this subject constantly proceed, considered, vi. 8—impropriety of the term, viii. 3—remarks of Dr. Leland, upon, ix. 24

— *rights of man*, defined, xii. 109

— *theo'ogy*, meaning of the phrase, ix. 403—has nothing to do with the evil in the world, x. 61—general failure of the systems of, x. 68

*Nature*, as seen by meditation; described, ii. 255—suggests no way of salvation for the guilty, ii. 322—works of, contain a revelation of God, ii. 438—secrets of, known only to God, iii. 322—knowledge of, con-

- nected with religion and piety, vii. 258
- Nature of God*, defined, ix. 367, 369, 470—represented as "goodness," x. 58
- Nazareth*, where situated, vi. 176
- Nebuchadnezzar*, the end to be answered in the humiliation of, viii. 482—his acknowledgment of the true God, alluded to, ix. 42
- Necessity*, a scene of strong temptation, iv. 36—the origin of evil, by some attributed to, x. 82—remarks on the doctrine of philosophical necessity, xi. 484
- Negroes*, moral condition of the, prior to the introduction of the Gospel by Christian Missions, i. 211—effects of the Gospel upon them, noticed, i. 212; vi. 528—victims of a heartless oppression, ii. 92—grossly insulted, ii. 93—their intellectual character, noticed, ii. 93–95—absurdly represented as being under a divine anathema, ii. 95–97—their patient and submissive character, ii. 97–99—guilt of the Christian church in neglecting their moral culture, ii. 99–102—colour of the, absurdly accounted for, vi. 51—moral condition of those who are uninstructed, vi. 432, *et seq.*—aggregate number of, under Christian instruction, vi. 468—testimony of Missionaries to the value set upon converted negroes, vi. 468, 469—sufferings of, for listening to the instruction of Missionaries, vi. 472, *et seq.*—testimonials of the effects of Christian doctrine upon them, vi. 497—and of the loyalty of the converted slaves, vi. 500—together with their sober and upright habits, vi. 510—the hypothesis that he is the connecting link between the white man and ape, accounted for, x. 53
- Nehemiah*, his patriotic character, vi. 118
- Neighbour*, the Christian sense of the term, iv. 337, 340—common import of the word, iv. 340—duties which we owe to, considered, xii. 103, *et seq.*—what implied in loving our, xii. 103, *et seq.*—source of the affection required, xii. 103, *et seq.*—its salutary influence, xii. 104—its nature, xii. 104—how it should be expressed, xii. 105—rule of its exercise, xii. 106—is the opposite of selfishness, xii. 106
- Nelson*, John, character of, v. 103—is sent by the Magistrates of Cornwall for a soldier, v. 117—Southey's flippant and callous remarks on the persecutions endured by, v. 133, 483
- Neologians*, hold the history of the fall of man to be fabulous, x. 402. See *German Divines*.
- Neptunian theory*, alluded to, ix. 346
- Nestorians*, the tenets of, x. 344
- Nestorius*, an ancient heretic, xii. 200
- New birth*, implies a change from darkness to light, iv. 408—destruction of the power of sin, iv. 409—introduces new connexions and relations, iv. 410—creation of new principles, iv. 410—difficulties attached to the doctrine, iv. 415—views of, entertained by the early Methodists, v. 81. See *Conversion*, *Regeneration*, &c.
- New South Wales*, importance of, as a Missionary station, i. 326
- New-Zealand*, history of the Wesleyan Mission there, i. 327—traditions in, concerning the deluge, ix. 50
- Newton*, Bishop, quoted, on "the man of sin, the son of perdition," vi. 301—character of his "Dissertations on the Prophecies," ix. 260—his testimony in favour of Ezekiel's prophecy, ix. 277—on the destruction of Babylon, xii. 328



- Newton*, Sir Isaac, his sentiments respecting the Apocalypse, vi. 328—on the nature of the Deity, ix. 370—on the title of "God," applied to Christ, x. 197
- Nice*, Council of, referred to, on the office of Archbishop, xii. 177—when held, xii. 200—the heresy which it refuted, xii. 200
- Nicene Creed*, embodies the opinions of the best ages of the church, ii. 436—the great design of, vii. 494; xii. 200—quoted, x. 249, 262—on the procession of the Holy Spirit, x. 359
- Nichols*, James, his translation of "the Works of Arminius," reviewed, vii. 474-492—great importance of this publication, vii. 475—quoted, on the views of Arminius on the effects of the fall, x. 437—his "Calvinism and Arminianism compared," alluded to, x. 438; xi. 445—on the doctrine of imputed righteousness, xi. 182—his translation of Arminius, quoted, xi. 189, 418-422, 443
- Nicodemus*, his character and conduct, iv. 406—his ignorance deplored, iv. 417
- Nicolaitanes*, their character, viii. 48
- Night*, in what respect there is none in heaven, iii. 157—an emblem of affliction, iii. 158
- Nimrod*, the first to whom kingly authority is ascribed, vi. 59—his appellation, "a mighty hunter," vi. 59—laid the foundation of the Assyrian empire, vi. 60
- Noah*, his deliverance, what it represented, iii. 441—character of, vi. 53; ix. 38—the illustrious nature of his faith, vi. 54; xii. 235; the effects of his faith, vi. 54; xii. 235—his skill in the erection of the ark, vi. 56—his intemperance alluded to, vi. 58—how his prophetic malediction upon Ham has been fulfilled, vi. 58—the earth peopled by his descendants, vi. 59—his mythological name, "Deucalion," noticed, ix. 50—the capacity of the ark, ix. 353—conjectures respecting the animals he saved, ix. 354—was acquainted with the doctrine of expiatory sacrifice, xi. 120—offered sacrifices which were expiatory, xi. 156
- Nominal Christianity*, fatal character of, described, iii. 316
- Norris*, Rev. John, M.A., on the obligatory nature of faith, x. 121
- Novgorod*, the cradle of the Russian empire, described, viii. 192—establishment of a Bible Society, viii. 194
- O.
- Obeahism*, a celebrated African superstition, ii. 115—the character and injurious influence of this custom in the West Indies, vi. 469
- Obed-Edom*, the removal of the ark of God to, considered, iv. 76
- Obedience*, a mark of the Christian character, iii. 105—a test of love, vi. 32—not included in the term "justifying faith," xi. 227—a duty which children owe their parents, xii. 138
- Observation*, power of, a proof of, an immaterial principle in man, vi. 29
- Occam*, William, his definition of the word "person," x. 111
- Occupation of man*, a proof of the relation in which he stands to God, x. 78, *et seq.*
- Odours*, eastern, alluded to, ii. 448—why applied to the knowledge of Christ, ii. 448—descriptive of the reviving and grateful influence of the Gospel, ii. 449
- Ænomaus*, his confutation of the heathen oracles, ix. 270
- Offence*, consciousness of, felt by every man, ix. 15

- Officers*, of the primitive church, enumerated, xii. 169
- Oglethorpe*, Mr. James, character of, v. 33—his opinion of the Wesleys, v. 33 (n)
- Oil*, a significant representation of divine grace, iv. 106
- Old Testament*, great antiquity of the, ix. 151
- Olivers*, Thomas, his opposition to the Conference declaration of 1771, noticed, v. 238
- Olives*, mount of, Christ's return thither after his public entry into Jerusalem, explained, iii. 173—where situated, vi. 175
- Omnipotence of Christ*, nature of the, scripture proof of, x. 301  
 ———— *of God*, defined, ix. 494—scripture testimonies concerning, ix. 495—practical uses of this doctrine, ix. 497, *et seq.*—object contemplated in the display of the, ix. 498. See *Power of God*.
- Omnipresence*, does not belong to the devil, vi. 38—of God, defined, ix. 367, 501—scripture testimonies respecting, ix. 501, *et seq.*—the heathen idea that God was the soul of the world, considered, ix. 502—scripture view of the doctrine, ix. 503, *et seq.*  
 ———— *of Christ*, scripture proofs of, considered, x. 291, *et seq.*—defended against the false interpretations of Socinianism, x. 292
- Omniscience of Christ*, nature of the, scripture proofs of, x. 294, *et seq.*—the objections of the Socinians to this doctrine, considered, x. 296—on the passage, where the Son is said not to know the day of judgment, x. 297, *et seq.*—knowledge of futurity, x. 300  
 ———— *of God*, descends to the individual acts of every man, ii. 401—displayed in the detection of Achan, vi. 102—defined, ix. 367; x. 3—scripture testimonies of, x. 3, *et seq.*—sayings of Heathens, concerning the, x. 6—moral influence of the doctrine, x. 7—foreknowledge of God, considered, x. 8, *et seq.*
- Onesimus*, who he was, vi. 306
- Onias*, the High Priest, builds a temple in Egypt, vi. 125
- "*Only begotten*," a term denoting the divine nature of the Son of God exclusively, ii. 436; vii. 9; x. 239—Whitby and Bishop Bull, quoted on the phrase, x. 239
- Ophitria*, or serpent worship, described, vii. 345, *et seq.*—traditions respecting, alluded to, ix. 49
- Opus*, the instrument of man's temptation, x. 406
- Opinion*, private, should not operate against the public welfare, iii. 2—unauthorized character of human opinion, ix. 21, *et seq.*
- Oppression*, raises the judgments of the Almighty, iii. 474—kingdom of Christ opposed to, viii. 405
- Optimism*, the theory of, examined, x. 69—the phrase, "Whatever is is best," considered, x. 71
- Oracles of God*, meaning of the term, iv. 46—the leading characters of, iv. 47, *et seq.*—infinite importance of, iv. 47—why termed "lively oracles," iv. 48—their interesting power, iv. 49—the form in which they are presented to us, iv. 50—their fulness, iv. 51—the duty of man in regard to them, iv. 52. See *Scriptures*.  
 ———— *of Heathenism*, their dark and ambiguous character, iv. 48; ix. 269, *et seq.*; xii. 362—a description of the, ix. 227, *et seq.*—observations on, by Dr. Jenkin, ix. 240—and by Bishop Watson, ix. 241—the oracle of Delphos characterized, ix. 269, *et seq.*; xii. 362—confutation of, by the philosopher Cœnomaus, ix. 270—not to be compared with the

- prophecies of Scripture, xii. 362
- Oral revelation*, the character of, viii. 4
- Ordained*, import of the term, xi. 387—never implies destiny, or predestination, xi. 388, 395
- Ordinances*, a work of the Christian ministry to administer, iii. 100—means of salvation, iii. 171—a peculiar privilege of the church, iv. 42
- Ordination of Christian Ministers*, a scriptural rite, i. 450—former practice among the Methodists, defended, v. 148, 272—Mr. Wesley ordains Preachers for Scotland, v. 268; but objects to the ordination by a certain Greek Bishop, v. 270—remarks on these ordinations, v. 272—Presbyterian forms of, followed by the Methodist Conference, vii. 140—meaning of the term, vii. 144—various forms of, vii. 145—validity of the Wesleyan mode, vii. 145, *et seq.*, 435—Mr. Wesley's views of, vii. 435—imposition of hands not essential to, vii. 435—a duty of the Pastors of the church, xii. 191—part which the people took in this office, in the primitive church, xii. 192—absurdity of the Church of Rome, in recognising it a sacrament, xii. 215
- Organic life*, absurdity of Bichat's theory of, ix. 477
- Organization*, not the cause of intelligence, thought, &c., ix. 473—fallacy of the argument of Priestley on this point, ix. 474—testimony of Scripture, against this supposition, ix. 475—is not the cause of life, ix. 476—definition of the term "organization," ix. 479
- Organs*, introduced into Methodist chapels, when desirable, i. 375—disputes in the Methodist societies in Leeds, respecting the erection of an organ, i. 471
- Origin*, on the inefficacy of the moral ethics of ancient philosophy, ix. 23—on the books contained in the New Testament, ix. 184—on the early progress of Christianity, ix. 321—on Christ being the Jehovah of the Old Testament, x. 185—on the allegorical relations furnished by Plato, x. 413—on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 207—his sentiments noticed, xi. 416—mentions infant baptism as the practice of his time, xii. 265
- Original sin*, an important doctrine of Scripture, i. 416—what implied in, described, iii. 352—awful effects of, on man, ix. 285—the tenets of the Remonstrants respecting, x. 438, 479—and of the Church of England, x. 439—nature of, penalty on Adam's sin, x. 442—in what sense Adam is the head and representative of the human race, x. 445—state in which man is placed through his federal connexion with Adam, x. 446, *et seq.*—justice of the threatened penalty considered, x. 450, *et seq.*—infants, how affected by, x. 452—the violent and extensive wickedness of nations, x. 457, *et seq.*—sin being discovered in the earliest years of children, x. 462—man's consciousness of a natural tendency to evil, x. 462—and his acknowledged inability to do right, are historical proofs of the truth of the doctrine, x. 464—scripture testimonies in favour of this truth, x. 465, *et seq.*—the theory which attributes wickedness to the influence of example and education, examined, x. 475, *et seq.*—the death and sufferings of infants, a proof that all are sinners, x. 480—erroneous views of the doctrine, examined, x. 481, *et seq.*—in what original sin is said to consist, x. 481, *et seq.*

- remarks on the transmission of this natural corruption, x. 485, *et seq.*—the existence of certain virtues among the unregenerate, accounted for, x. 487, *et seq.* See *Depravity*.
- Orphic verses*, an allusion to Moses in the, ix. 150
- Orthodoxy*, insufficient as a barrier against corruption, vii. 184
- Ottoman Porte*, origin of the term, vi. 68
- Ousirei I.*, a description of his tomb, viii. 188
- Outram*, William, D.D., quoted, on the vicarious sacrifices of the law, xi. 93—and on their expiatory character, xi. 99
- Overseer*, synonymous with the order of Bishop or Presbyter, - vi. 285
- Ovid*, his notion of a general conflagration, ix. 53
- Owen*, John, D. D., on the precedence of the direct witness of the Spirit of God, to the indirect testimony of our own, v. 182—on the procession of the Holy Spirit, x. 359
- Oxford*, Mr. Wesley's last sermon before the University of, v. 118
- P.
- Paganism*, general character of Pagans, ii. 84–115—Christianity contrasted with, ii. 251; iii. 156—its enmity against God, ii. 307—recognised the immortality of the soul, ii. 385—denied the resurrection of the body, ii. 385—errors of, rooted in education, ii. 442—where it reigns vice is unchecked, ii. 481—the wants of, are a religious want, ii. 489—fatal effects of the darkness of, iii. 156—furnishes no answer to the question, “What must I do to be saved?” iii. 333—an awful destitution of conscience in, iv. 123—legerdemain much cultivated by, vi. 77—immoral tendency of, viii. 5—worst forms of Christianity better than, viii. 5—Leslie's rules applied to the legends of, ix. 162, *et seq.* See *Heathen*.
- Paine*, Thomas, assertion of, concerning a failure of Isaiah's and Jeremiah's prophecy, proved to be false, ix. 274–276—his gross assault on the prophecy of Ezekiel, repelled, ix. 277—his moral character, ix. 312
- Palestine*, interesting recollections of, vii. 336—the strong attachment of the Jews to, viii. 211
- Paley*, Archdeacon, his observations on conversion, v. 413; and on the effects of conversion, v. 423—on the institution of the Sabbath, vi. 458—his crude notions of the obligation of the Sabbath, refuted, viii. 142, *et seq.*; xii. 89, *et seq.*—his refutation of Hume on Miracles, ix. 108—referred to on heathen testimonies to the truth of Gospel history, ix. 172—on the books contained in the New Testament, ix. 184—on the pretended heathen miracles, ix. 232—on the incidental coincidences to the truth of Scripture, ix. 319; xii. 344—on the existence of a great First Cause, ix. 390—the basis of his “Natural Theology,” noticed, ix. 403—his illustration of design in the works of God, by the mechanism of a watch, ix. 422, *et seq.*; by the structure and use of the eye, ix. 430, *et seq.*; by the double parts of the body, iv. 436; and the construction of the spine, ix. 438—on contrivance associated with power, ix. 442—on the modern schemes of Atheism, ix. 449, *et seq.*—on the unity of the Deity, ix. 467—on the omnipotence of God, ix. 494—on the omnipresence of God, ix. 509—his “Natu-

- ral Theology," referred to, x. 50—on the beneficial contrivance in the works of God, x. 62—on the use of predatory and venomous animals, x. 63—on the happiness of animals, x. 65—on the consistency of prayer, with the idea of the absolute wisdom of God, xii. 60—on the duty of family prayer, xii. 64—his imperfect statement of the advantages of, noticed, xii. 69—on the unlawfulness of suicide, xii. 115—on the criminality of duelling, xii. 120—on the original law of marriage, xii. 130—the absurdity of his notion of a social compact originating government, xii. 152
- Παλληγυρις*, explained, iv. 423
- Parables*, general rule of interpreting, iv. 61—reasons why the Saviour spoke in parables, iv. 97, 406—his twofold object, iv. 97, 98—often employed by our Lord, vi. 181—were in common use among the Jews, vi. 181; and why, vi. 181—many now found in Jewish literature, vi. 181, 182—of the prodigal son, illustrated, vi. 182—why our Lord founded parables on the notion of a King or King's son, vi. 182; and so often alluded to feasts and marriages, vi. 183—had not always both a moral and spiritual meaning, vi. 183—Jeremiah's parable of the potter, illustrated, xi. 319, *et seq.*
- Παραβολη εν*, explained, viii. 77
- Paradise*, heavenly, origin of the term, iii. 72—contrasted with the primitive paradise, the garden of Eden, iii. 73—termed "the inheritance of the saints in light," and why, iii. 157—its nature alluded to, iii. 360—the man caught up into, who he was, vi. 276
- Pardon*, the commencement of the true life of the soul, iii. 313—a blessing flowing from the sacrificial death of Christ, iii. 314—moral principles exhibited in the scripture doctrine of, ix. 294; xii. 352, *et seq.*—not secured by repentance, or reformation, ix. 295, 296; xi. 15–22—is not merely an act of divine prerogative, xi. 8, *et seq.*—is ascribed to the death of Christ, xi. 23—not granted, unconditionally, xi. 61—principles on which God can pardon, stated, xii. 353, *et seq.* See *Forgiveness, Justification.*
- Parents*, important duties of, iv. 470—to instruct children in the word of God, iv. 511; xii. 141—authority of, under the Mosaic law, considered, ix. 329—duties of, to their children, defined, xii. 140, *et seq.*—the scriptural character of, in their families, xii. 141—are to enforce truth by example, xii. 142—parental government, characterized, xii. 143—corporal correction seldom necessary, xii. 143—duty of, in the settlement of their children in the world, noticed, xii. 144
- Parishes*, original motives for dividing the country into, vii. 274—importance of a practical operation of the same principle in large towns, vii. 275—origin of, xii. 176
- Parliament*, British, character of the, i. 431, 432; ii. 149
- Parsees*, worshippers of fire, in India, ix. 56
- "*Partakers of the Holy Ghost*," meaning of the phrase, xi. 291
- Pascal*, quoted, on practical Christianity, vi. 361—on the fidelity of the sacred writers, ix. 312
- Passions*, ascribed to God, Archbishop King on, vii. 304; x. 31—Rev. J. Wesley on, x. 31—Melancthon on, x. 32—Rev. Thomas Grinfield, quoted on, x. 33
- Passover*, an eminent type of Christ, iii. 396—reasons of its institution, vi. 77, 78—why

- Christ was put to death at the feast of, vi. 210—customs observed at Jerusalem during the, vi. 235—psalms sung during the ceremony, vi. 236—a season much remembered, x. 177—meaning of the term, xi. 99—an expiatory and vicarious service, xi. 99—the institution of, alluded to, xii. 287
- Pastoral Addresses* to the Methodist societies, for 1819, viii. 328—for 1820, viii. 336—for 1821, viii. 347—for 1824, viii. 356—and for 1825, viii. 366—object of these addresses, viii. 328
- Pastors*, who they were in the primitive church, vi. 285; xii. 170—nature of their office, xii. 170, 187—duty of, to their flock, xii. 187, *et seq.*—salutary check on their proceedings, xii. 189, 190—are to ordain Ministers, xii. 191—solemn obligation of the law of Christ, xii. 194—rights peculiar to the pastoral office, specified, xii. 194, 195—admission of members into the church, entrusted to, xii. 196—the trial of unworthy Pastors should be committed to the ministry, and why, xii. 197—duty of, in the infliction and removal of censure, xii. 204, *et seq.*
- Patience*, an indispensable qualification of a Christian Missionary, i. 259
- Patriarch*, office of, in the church, xii. 177—reason of the appointment, xii. 177—179
- Patriarchal dispensation*, high character of the truths recognised in the, vi. 72, 73
- Patriarchs*, principles of the religion of the, iii. 184—why they chose to dwell in tents, iii. 445—nature of the sacrifices presented by, iv. 279—how far they understood the promises of a Redeemer, vi. 39—ancient habits of, among modern Arabians, vi. 63—high character of the truths embraced by, vi. 72, 73—nature of those who existed among the Jews, subsequent to the destruction of their polity, vi. 191—fragments of the fabric of a patriarchal church in the book of Genesis, vii. 353—acquainted with the doctrine of the resurrection, viii. 42—the flood, a powerful attestation to the sanctity of the religion of the, ix. 39—the theology of, embodied in the book of Job, ix. 87—authority of the ancient religion of the, ix. 89—their views respecting the Deity of the Holy Spirit, x. 363—the worship performed by, was domestic, xii. 67—religion of the, what, xii. 303
- Patriotism*, not irreconcilable with universal charity, i. 159; ii. 25—instruction a work of patriotism, ii. 250—true patriotism defined, ii. 250—of Christ, iv. 451; and of the Christian, illustrated, iv. 521—manifested in Daniel, iii. 18
- Patipassians*, a name given to the followers of Sabellius, x. 357
- Patterns* of heavenly things, what, iv. 169
- Paul*, Saint, the great model of a Christian Minister, i. 252—his talents sanctified to the cause of truth, ii. 132—his regard for the church at Rome, ii. 268—why he desired to visit that city, ii. 269—the grounds of his confidence in the Gospel of Christ, ii. 270, *et seq.*—his assurance of a divine call to the work of the ministry, ii. 270—the miraculous character of his conversion, ii. 271; vi. 244—his conviction of the divinity of Christ, ii. 271—his view of the effects of the Gospel ii. 273—and its experimental character, ii. 276—his literary character, ii. 318—animadverts on the worldly wisdom of the Corinthian church, ii. 319—the glorified body of

Christ seen at his conversion, ii. 392—does not draw proof of the resurrection from vegetation, ii. 393—the part which he took in the martyrdom of Stephen, considered, ii. 425—the perverted state of his conscience, ii. 426—divine wisdom, how displayed in his conversion, ii. 427—the proper model of a Christian Missionary, iii. 15—his conversion an act of divine grace and power, iii. 37—his character as a persecutor, iii. 37—his former prejudices against Christianity, iii. 38; and worldly ambition, iii. 39—his sincerity as a persecutor, iii. 40—temper of his mind at his conversion, iii. 40—his embracing Christianity, an act of grace of the Saviour to the church, iii. 41—the hope of the resurrection, how illustrated by him, iii. 132—the life he lived in the flesh, described, iii. 228–231—his religious decision, iii. 228—his regard for personal salvation, iii. 229—his life of devotion, iii. 229—his heavenly mindedness, iii. 230—his submission to divine Providence, iii. 231—his laborious usefulness, iii. 231—the principle of his spiritual life, iii. 232—in his writings explained many typical things, iii. 281—why he gloried in the cross, iii. 392—his exemplary zeal, iii. 455, 456—directed by the Spirit of God where to labour, iii. 461—his compassion for those destitute of the Gospel, iii. 463—his great benevolence, iv. 120—his universal charity, iv. 531—his extraordinary conversion, vi. 244—conversion of, a powerful demonstration of the truth of Christianity, vi. 244—why he called himself a Roman, vi. 245—was a tentmaker, vi. 245—sketch of his labours, vi. 245, *et seq.*—the style of, considered, vi. 254—character

of his Epistles, vi. 255—defends his mode of preaching Christ, vi. 267—sends Timothy to Corinth, vi. 268—his vivid description of charity, vi. 271—his discourse on the resurrection, vi. 272—defends himself against the Hellenistic Jews of Corinth, vi. 273—his outward sorrows, vi. 274—his authority depreciated by the Jewish teachers, vi. 278—no difference between him and Peter, vi. 278—his prayer for the church at Ephesus, considered, vi. 283—his willingness to offer himself a sacrifice, vi. 290—guards the Colossians against philosophy and vain deceit, vi. 293, 294—doubtful how far he alludes to the Gnostics in his writings, viii. 34—attacks the Platonic Jews, viii. 35—his mode of conducting the argument in favour of the resurrection, viii. 41—his character as an Apostle, viii. 439—confirms the Mosaic account of the fall, x. 406—and Saint James reconciled on the doctrine of justification, vi. 316; xi. 234—his argument in Romans vii., considered, xii. 5—import of his argument in 1 Corinthians xv., xii. 18—his views of the rite of circumcision, explained, xii. 228, *et seq.*

*Payne*, George, LL.D., his "Elements of Moral Science," quoted, on the power of observation and reasoning in man, vi. 29—his observations on moral rectitude, xii. 40

*Peace*, restoration of, to Europe, noticed, i. 158—Mr. Watson's sermon on this occasion, i. 159–162; ii. 20—best promoted by the diffusion of Gospel truth, i. 161; ii. 39—national thanksgiving for, an imperative duty, ii. 21—what there is in national peace to excite our gratitude, ii. 21–28—not at all times a blessing,

- ii. 26—what rendered the peace of 1814 a blessing of special value, ii. 28–33—facilities increased by peace for the extension of the Gospel, ii. 32—God is ever to be acknowledged as the author of peace, ii. 33—duty of Christians in the promotion of universal peace, ii. 39, 40—a great national mercy, iv. 240—of a nation, the result of the truth of God being diffused, iv. 517
- Peace of God*, a privilege connected with the church, iv. 40
- Pearson*, Bishop, his “Exposition of the Creed,” character of, i. 31—on the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, v. 403; viii. 242, 260; xi. 270—on the descent of Christ into hell, viii. 288—on the object of Christ’s descent into hell proper, examined, viii. 295—on the nature of God, ix. 369—on the unity of God, ix. 464—on the omnipotence of God, ix. 500—on the unity of the three Persons in the Godhead, x. 114—on the word “Jehovah,” x. 136—on the pre-existence of Christ, x. 150—his prior existence to Abraham, x. 157—on the etymology of the word “*Kyrios*,” x. 193—on the name “Emmanuel,” x. 204—on the creative acts of Christ, x. 311—on the phrase, “the form of God,” x. 339—on the procession of the Holy Spirit, x. 360
- Pelagius*, tenets of, alluded to, x. 433—on the death with which our progenitors were threatened, x. 440—dangerous character of his theology, noticed, xi. 416—on the practice of infant baptism, xii. 265
- Pella*, where situated and for what celebrated, vi. 210
- Pellicanus*, quoted, on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 210
- Penance*, a Popish sacrament, unwarranted by Scripture, xii. 214
- Penn*, Granville, Esq., on the comparative insignificance of man, ix. 335—his “Comparative Estimate of the Mineral and Mosaic Geologies,” quoted, ix. 336, 340, 347—on the veracity of the Mosaic chronology, ix. 341—character of his “Comparative Estimate,” ix. 347—on the creation of light, ix. 349—on the formation of the earth, ix. 356, *et seq.*
- Pentateuch*, among the books collected by Ezra, vi. 119—on the impossibility of forgery in, ix. 152, *et seq.*; xii. 335, *et seq.*—on the credibility and authenticity of, ix. 174, *et seq.*
- Pentecost*, day of, a day of the power of Christ, ii. 310—permanent effects of the, upon Stephen, ii. 419—meaning of the term, vi. 242—authentication of the miracle of, ix. 178, *et seq.*
- People of God*, inhabitants of heaven, so described, iv. 17—their number adverted to, iv. 18—in what respects God is, their God, iv. 18, 19—God the rock of, iv. 24–28
- Perfect love*, defined, xii. 7
- Perfection*, Christian, an important doctrine of Scripture, i. 470—Mr. Watson’s remarks upon it, i. 580—a maturity of, to be enjoyed in life, iii. 11—the phrase “made perfect,” explained, iv. 426—as defined in the early Minutes of Conference, v. 167—its scriptural character, illustrated, v. 168—all perfection in the creature is relative, vi. 32—defined, xii. 7. See *Sanctification*, *Holiness*, &c.
- of heaven, described, iv. 427
- Perfections of God*, a mere contemplation of the, can afford no hope of divine favour, iii. 355—illustrated by the sacrificial death of Christ, iii. 359—displayed in the Son



- of God, iv. 133—use of reason in contemplating the, ix. 139—harmonize in the doctrine of atonement, ix. 300—demonstration of the, ix. 403, *et seq.*—meaning of the term, ix. 461—considered, x. 106
- Peripatetics*, opinions of the, viii. 23—denied the immortality of the soul, ix. 72; xii. 313
- Perish*, reason of any man finally perishing, declared, xi. 278—scripture sense of the term, viii. 434
- Perron*, M. du, his account of Zoroaster and the Zend, alluded to, ix. 53
- Perronet*, Rev. Vincent, of Shoreham, character of, v. 125—his affectionate sympathy with Mr. Wesley, under a severe disappointment, v. 200—his letter to C. Wesley, on the matrimonial afflictions of his brother, v. 205—account of his death, and strong attachment to Methodism, v. 205
- Persecution*, triumphs of the Gospel over, ii. 442—the way in which the Gospel triumphed, ii. 443—of the Methodists at Wednesbury, v. 112—116, 125—in Cornwall, v. 117—at Devizes, v. 128—132—ancient persecutions of the church, alluded to, vi. 324—intolerant enactments against Missionaries in the West Indies, detailed, vi. 471—doctrine of the lawfulness of, introduced into the church by Augustine, vii. 479—of the Vaudois, alluded to, vii. 460—principle on which all persecution proceeds, viii. 547
- Perseverance*, law of, in the exercise of charity, ii. 348
- Persia*, tradition in, concerning the deluge, ix. 50—on the reformed religion of, ix. 53—cause of this reformation, alluded to, ix. 54—manner in which they were prepared for this change, effected by Zoroaster, ix. 55
- Person*, definition of the term, as used in the Trinity, x. 111—the word not being used in the Scripture, noticed, x. 113—on the unity of the three Persons in the Godhead, x. 114
- Personality of the Holy Ghost*, scripture testimonies respecting the, x. 362, *et seq.*—proved from the association of a person under the appellation with two other persons, x. 362—recognised by the Patriarchs, x. 363; and the Prophets, x. 364—established by the plural form of the name of God, x. 366; by the Jewish and apostolic mode of benediction, x. 367; by the form of baptism, x. 368; by the mode of his subsistence in the Trinity, x. 371—absurdity of a rejection of this doctrine, x. 372—proved by the use of the masculine pronoun and relative, x. 374; by the ascription of personal acts, x. 374
- Peru*, establishment of schools on the British system in, viii. 221—circulation of the Scriptures there, viii. 225, *et seq.*
- Peruvians*, traditions discovered among them, concerning the creation, ix. 48
- Pestilence*, upon Israel, subsequent to the numbering of the Jews, ii. 399
- Petavius*, the Arianism of, x. 357
- Peter*, Saint, why the term “fisher of men” was applied to him, ii. 230—his character as an Apostle, iii. 36—keys of heaven, how given to him, iii. 94; vi. 228—his confidence in the stability of the Gospel, iii. 341—his repentance and recovery, iv. 449—why he was asked three times concerning his love for Christ, vi. 217—possessed no greater dignity or authority than the rest of the Apostles, vi. 228—no difference between him and St. Paul, vi. 278—to whom his first Epistle was addressed, vi.

- 318; its design, vi. 318—  
 opinion of Erasmus, Scaliger,  
 and Ostervald on the Epistles  
 of, vi. 319—why he specially  
 enjoined obedience on govern-  
 ors, vi. 319—in his confession  
 of Christ, he acknowledged  
 his eternal filiation, vii. 18-20  
 —his view of baptism, xii. 235,  
*et seq.*
- Petrobrussians*, described, xii.  
 265
- Peyran*, Jean Rodolphe, his  
 "Historical Defence of the  
 Vaudois," &c., reviewed, vii.  
 454-466—establishes the an-  
 tiquity of the Waldensian  
 Church, vii. 457—attributes  
 the English Reformation to the  
 fidelity of the Vaudois, vii.  
 459
- Phantasiastæ*, tenets of the, x.  
 343
- Pharaoh*, how hardened by the  
 Almighty, vi. 77; xi. 317—  
 his moral character, xi. 316—  
 the object contemplated in his  
 being "raised up," xi. 317
- Pharisaism*, the great danger of,  
 iv. 30—its immoral tendency,  
 iv. 440
- Pharisees*, furnish an awful in-  
 stance how far sin darkens  
 the reason of man, ii. 211—  
 their hatred to Christ, an evi-  
 dence in favour of his works,  
 ii. 224—a Pharisaic formalist  
 the farthest from the kingdom  
 of God, ii. 270—had given up  
 the doctrine of the divinity of  
 the Messiah, ii. 303—their in-  
 veteracy against Christianity,  
 iii. 39—their origin and opi-  
 nions, vi. 129—awfully cor-  
 rupted the ancient doctrine of  
 the Jewish Church, vi. 130—  
 why offended at Christ forgiv-  
 ing sins, vi. 190—why they  
 solicited "a sign from hea-  
 ven," vi. 195—their views of  
 the Messiah, x. 223
- Philanthropy*, elevated pursuits  
 of Christian philanthropy, ii.  
 350—universal philanthropy  
 of the Gospel, iv. 163—is  
 only fostered and matured by  
 religion, iv. 343
- Philaster*, Bishop of Brescia, his  
 catalogue of the books of  
 Scripture, noticed, ix. 185
- Philemon*, who he was, character  
 of Paul's Epistle to, vi. 306
- Philippians*, who they were,  
 when the Gospel was planted  
 there, and when the Epistle  
 was written to them, vi. 287  
 —character of Paul's preach-  
 ing at Philippi, vi. 288
- Philo*, a Hellenist Jew, vi. 125  
 —embraced Platonism at  
 Alexandria, viii. 29—his cha-  
 racter as an expositor, viii. 73  
 —his frequent use of the  
 word "Logos," x. 269, 271—  
 his view of the term, consi-  
 dered, x. 275—from whence  
 he derived the doctrine of the  
 "Logos," x. 278—how far he  
 mingled Platonic speculations  
 with his discourses, x. 279
- Philosophy*, pagan and Christian  
 philosophy, contrasted, ii. 199-  
 200—true theology is true  
 philosophy, ii. 200—erroneous  
 views which philosophy takes  
 of internal religion, ii. 213—  
 practical effects of, ii. 278—  
 objections of, to the doctrine  
 of the resurrection, answered  
 by the power of God, ii. 395  
 —unhallowed, which does not  
 respect Christianity, iii. 27—  
 secrets of, known only to God,  
 iii. 323—and vain deceit,  
 against which Paul warned  
 the Colossians, vi. 293, 294—  
 nature of, which corrupted  
 Christianity, vi. 295—natural  
 philosophy ought never to be  
 disconnected with religion, vii.  
 258—a philosophical preach-  
 ing of the Gospel, condemned,  
 vii. 261—objections of, to the  
 doctrine of a literal resurrec-  
 tion, alluded to, viii. 41—con-  
 trast between, and revelation,  
 examined, ix. 331—knowledge  
 of, derived from revelation,  
 xii. 309—on the self-sufficiency  
 of, xii. 311

- Philosophy*, pagan, its present deleterious influence on Christianity, ii. 198—awful character of the ancient philosophers, iv. 440—coincidence of the Hindoo and Greek systems of, ix. 58, 59; xii. 313—remarks of Stillingfleet on the, ix. 63—moral sentiments of, how to be received, ix. 63—opinions of, concerning the soul, ix. 67, *et seq.*—on the acknowledged ignorance of ancient philosophers, xii. 311—testimony of, to the existence, &c., of Moses and Christ, xii. 332, 341—and the truth of the inspired writings, xii. 341
- Pianezza*, Marquess di, his sanguinary crusade against the Vaudois, vii. 461
- Piedmont*, valleys of, successful resistance to Popish domination there, vii. 455—their interesting character, vii. 459—Milton's sonnet on the massacre in, vii. 461. See *Vaudois*.
- Pierce*, Rev. Joseph, on the eternity of Christ, x. 290
- , Thomas, D.D., his "Correct Copy of some Notes concerning God's Decrees," noticed, i. 469—characteristic sketch of, i. 469
- Pierre*, Saint, his "Studies of Nature," referred to, x. 50
- Pietism*, in Germany, an interesting description of, v. 519
- Piety*, an essential qualification of the Christian Minister, ii. 448—considered as a labour, iii. 29—character and reward of persevering piety, iii. 261, *et seq.*—general results of, viii. 409
- Pilate*, why the Jews conveyed Christ to, vi. 212—and why sent by Pilate to Herod, vi. 212
- Pilgrims*, the character of Christians while on the earth, ii. 344—their duty as such, iii. 444
- Piscator*, John, on the Antinomian doctrine of imputed righteousness, xi. 182
- Pitt*, Right Hon. William, his views of the independence of Europe, vi. 369—defence of his character as a statesman, vi. 390, *et seq.*
- Places of worship*, memorials of religious facts and doctrines, ii. 410—advantages arising from their publicity, ii. 411—tidings of salvation are announced to men, ii. 411—moral consequences resulting from the erection of, ii. 412—zeal of our ancestors in the erection of, laudable, ii. 415—principles which should command their erection, ii. 467—particularly specified, iii. 209
- Plague*, the moral effects produced by the, on the inhabitants of London, v. 516
- Plagues*, inflicted upon Egypt, vi. 76—moral results of, ix. 40, 234—that of darkness, considered, ix. 203—of the destruction of the first-born, ix. 204, *et seq.*
- Plato*, doctrines of, alluded to, ii. 432—how mixed up with Judaism and Christianity, viii. 20, 23—the principles of his theory, viii. 23—the Platonic Jews attacked by St. Paul, viii. 35—influence of his philosophy on the Fathers, considered, viii. 59—believed in the eternity of matter, ix. 27—on the origin of law, ix. 33, 34—accordance of some of his opinions with the Mosaic records, ix. 35—on the necessity of divine instruction, ix. 61—his notion of a divine providence, ix. 66—his lax views of the evil of lying, ix. 80—on the immutability of the Deity, x. 42—his frequent use of the term "Logos," x. 269—his view of that term, considered, x. 276, *et seq.*—on the allegorical relations furnished by, x. 413—on the unlawfulness of suicide, xii. 115—on the origin of laws, xii. 309

- Platonists*, of Alexandria, their corrupting speculations, vi. 294
- Pleasures of piety*, specially granted to religious perseverance, iii. 262
- of *sin*, described, iii. 185—their transitory character, iii. 186
- Pleroma*, a Gnostic term, defined, viii. 32, 38
- Pliny*, denied the soul's immortality, ix. 72; xii. 313—alludes to Moses, ix. 149; xii. 333—his reference to Jesus Christ, ix. 168—on the early progress of Christianity, ix. 320—his letter to Trajan, quoted, xii. 213
- Plurality*, the plural appellations of Jehovah, considered, x. 136, *et seq.*—variously accounted for by the heterodox, x. 138—strength of the argument for the Trinity does not rest here, x. 139
- Plutarch*, on the origin of moral evil, ix. 65—his lax views of the evil of fornication, ix. 79—many of the notions of, derived from corrupted traditions of the fall, x. 413
- Plutonian theory*, alluded to, ix. 346
- Pocock*, Edward, D.D., on the eternity of the Son of God, x. 232
- Poets*, Christian, contrasted with the ancient Prophets, iii. 123
- Political economy*, nature of the science of, vii. 271
- *institutions* of Moses, considered, vi. 94
- *justice*, defined, xii. 150
- *predictions*, general character of, vi. 368
- Polwhele*, Robert, editor of a new edition of "Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists compared," his character, v. 485—488
- Polygamy*, glaring evils of, xii. 129—not directly countenanced under the Mosaic law, xii. 129—condemned by the Prophet Malachi, xii. 130
- Polytheism*, annihilates the doctrine of Providence, ii. 484; ix. 66—general evils of, ix. 470
- Pompey the Great*, besieges and takes Jerusalem, vi. 131—invests Hyrcanus with the government of Judea, vi. 131—his conduct with the Judges in regard to his father-in-law, vii. 233
- Poole*, Matthew, V.D.M., quoted, on the precedence of the *direct* witness of the Spirit of God to the *indirect* testimony of our own, v. 183—on the vicarious character of Christ's sufferings, xi. 35—on those scriptures which speak of Christ's dying for those that perish, xi. 284—his absurd manner of evading their force, xi. 286—on the triumph of Christ, vii. 302, 307—on the term "Spirit of Holiness," applied to the divine nature of Christ, x. 248—and on the apostates mentioned in the Hebrews, xi. 290
- Poor*, the, excluded from the mysteries of Paganism, ii. 329—have a name and a place in the Gospel, ii. 330—wholly neglected among the Heathen, ii. 444—the collection for, in Judea, alluded to, vi. 276
- *laws*, in what respects injurious, vii. 271
- Pope*, the, proved to be "the man of sin," "the son of perdition," vi. 301—origin of, xii. 185
- , Alexander, a sentiment of, animadverted on, ii. 207; iii. 492—his "Messiah," noticed, ix. 52—the phrase, "Whatever is is best," examined, x. 71
- Porphyry*, his testimony to the truth of Gospel history, ix. 170; xii. 342—his attack on the prophecies of Daniel, ix. 269
- Porteus*, Bishop, founded the Society for the Conversion of the Negroes, vi. 427—failure of his attempts in converting the slaves, vi. 487—death and character of Dr. Munn, a Mis-

- sionary whom the Bishop sent out to the West Indies, vi. 488  
 —his account of the condition of slaves among the ancients, ix. 77—referred to, on the prevalency of human sacrifice, ix. 83—on the “beneficial Effects of Christianity,” ix. 324  
*Πως*, import of, xii. 19  
*Potter*, Jeremiah’s parable of the, illustrated, xi. 319, *et seq.*  
*Poverty of spirit*, described, vi. 345  
*Power*, origin of, xii. 150  
 — *of Christ*, miracles typical of the, ii. 234—as displayed when arrested by the High Priest, ii. 234—day of Christ’s power, what, ii. 310—the willingness of the people in the day of power, ii. 312  
 — *of God*, in what respect the Gospel is the power of God, ii. 276—answers all objections urged against the doctrine of the resurrection, ii. 395—how it has been displayed, iv. 165—importance of the revelation of, iv. 228—value of faith in the, iv. 228–230—Christ the image of, iv. 311—displayed in the sun and moon standing still, vi. 102. See *Omnipotence of God*.  
 — *of man*, occasionally overruled for the spread of the Gospel, ii. 366—political, confined to Christian nations, iv. 248—of Mr. Wesley in the government of his societies, defended, v. 225—remarks on Mr. Wesley’s alleged love of power, v. 344  
*Powers of the world to come*, meaning of the phrase, xi. 291  
*Premiative justice*, defined, x. 98  
*Prayer*, highly acceptable to God, ii. 77—efficacy of, in the evangelization of the world, ii. 369—the necessity of, in consecrating the house of God, ii. 417—importance of, in the hour of death, ii. 428—persevering, a concomitant of true faith, ii. 460—various kinds of, mentioned, ii. 469; xii. 63—comprehensive character of public prayer, ii. 469, 470—spirit of, connected with vigorous exertion, iii. 204—regard for prayer manifested in St. Paul, iii. 229—the duty and advantage of secret prayer, considered, iii. 436—efficacy of, iii. 470—raises God out of his habitation, iii. 476—success of, in removing afflictions, iv. 56—denoted by stretching forth the hand, iv. 498—efficacy of, instanced in deliverance from danger, among the early Methodists, v. 135—Paul’s prayer for the church at Ephesus, considered, vi. 283—implies the insufficiency of man, vi. 354—addressed to one or other of the Persons in the Godhead, x. 147—a great benefit of the atonement, xii. 12—its nature, xii. 53—enjoined by Scripture, xii. 53, *et seq.*—reasons for, xii. 55—its true character, xii. 56, *et seq.*—why this duty was appointed, xii. 58—objections to the exercise, considered, xii. 59, *et seq.*—intercessory prayer, xii. 61—ejaculatory prayer, nature of, xii. 63—private prayer, xii. 63, 64—family prayer, xii. 64—liberty to accommodate the modes of worship to existing circumstances, how far allowed, xii. 72—the practice of the Apostles to be respectfully recognised, xii. 73—objections to the use of extempore prayer, considered, xii. 79. See *Forms of prayer*, *Liturgies*.  
*Prayer-meetings*, defended against the slander of the Christian Guardian, vii. 166  
*Preachers*, Methodist, labours of the early, v. 156—Mr. Wesley’s brief and pointed notices of the deaths of, v. 190–192—an examination of the character of, instituted, v. 198—cause of “leaning toward Calvinism,” v. 226—ordained by imposition of hands for Scotland, v.

- 268—checked against an undue exercise of power, vii. 102—possess equal ministerial authority with any Christian church, vii. 144—defended from the charge of seeking influence and interest, vii. 146—power of, contrasted, with that of the national Clergy, vii. 151—powers of, stated and defended, vii. 158, *et seq.*—a great mortality among, noticed, viii. 351, 366
- Preaching*, best mode of, stated, i. 451; ii. 190–194—termed “a manifestation of the odour of the knowledge of Christ,” ii. 448—extraordinary effects following that of Mr. Wesley, v. 86—among the Puritans and Nonconformists, v. 89—the importance of method in, vii. 470—general rule to be observed in, vii. 470—the special character of Methodist preaching, vii. 472
- *Christ*, St. Paul defends his manner of, vi. 267
- “——— *of the cross*,” import of the phrase, iii. 57
- Precepts*, difference between moral and positive, x. 423—reasons on which all moral precepts rest, xii. 36. See *Morality*.
- Predatory animals*, considered, whether an evil, x. 64
- Predestination*, Mr. Wesley’s early views of, v. 8—of the Gentiles to the church of God, alluded to by the Apostle Paul, vi. 261, 262—general influence of the doctrine of, vii. 240—vague statements of, by Dr. Chalmers, in his sermon on that subject, vii. 241—absurdity of the Calvinian idea of, vii. 241—its most exceptionable and dangerous exhibition by Dr. Chalmers, vii. 242—its fatal consequences, vii. 243—its degrading operation on the human will, vii. 244—the moral influence of the doctrine, vii. 245—results to which the doctrine of absolute predestination logically leads, vii. 247, *et seq.*—fallacy of the salvo, “God ordains the end, and he ordains the means,” exposed, vii. 249—in what respects there is an absolute predestination, vii. 251—how inconsistent with moral agency, vii. 252—Archbishop King’s theory respecting, and an examination of, vii. 294, *et seq.*—taught by the primitive Fathers, not that of Calvinism, vii. 479—scripture views of the term, xi. 302, *et seq.*—import of the term as used by St. Paul, xi. 374—sentiments of Calvin on, stated and considered, xi. 405, *et seq.*—the three leading schemes of, as held by the Reformed Churches, noticed, xi. 418—supralapsarian and sublapsarian theories of, described, xi. 419—absurdity of the Calvinian notion of, xi. 423, *et seq.*—the assertion that the doctrine of predestination precludes the necessity of prayer considered, xii. 59, *et seq.* See *Election*, *Calvinistic controversy*.
- Pre-existence of Christ*, to Abraham, asserted, vi. 203; x. 156—the doctrine of, considered, x. 149, *et seq.*—importance of, x. 149—scripture testimonies concerning, x. 150, *et seq.*, 337,—how the doctrine is perverted by Socinianism, x. 150, *et seq.*, 337
- Prejudice*, inveterate character of religious, iii. 39
- Preparation*, of the Gospel of peace, explained, iv. 434
- Presbyter*, synonymous with the order of Bishops, vi. 285; xii. 171—controversy concerning the order of Bishop and Presbyter, alluded to, xii. 171—the Presbyterians have the advantage of the argument, xii. 171—when the distinction between the orders arose in the church, xii. 171—no proof that ordaining to the ministry was given

- to the Bishops to the exclusion of the Presbyters, xii. 171—cannot lawfully surrender his right of government in the church into the hands of a Bishop, xii. 182
- Prescience*, divine, not inconsistent with human agency, vii. 241; xi. 470—the character of the divine prescience, described, xi. 471, *et seq.* See *Foreknowledge.*
- Presence of God*, how manifested in the tabernacle, ii. 472—and in the house of God, ii. 473—a visible manifestation of, always vouchsafed to man, iii. 70—was always approached by sacrifice, iii. 71—a source of joy to the Christian, iii. 145—secured to the public assemblies of Christians, iii. 214—implied in the name Emmanuel, iii. 240—manifested in our existence, iii. 241—in his gracious communications, iii. 241—in the work of redemption, iii. 242—in the influence which he exerts, iii. 243—and in the course of discipline to which he subjects us, iii. 244—to the sinner is part of the sting of death, iii. 430—specially experienced in the closet, iii. 437—expressions of Scripture intimating the locality of, explained, iii. 472—is special and visible in heaven, iv. 15—importance of, in the dispensation of grace, iv. 184
- Preservation*, uncorrupted, of the Scriptures, ix. 184, *et seq.*—evidence in favour of, considered, ix. 186, *et seq.*—a divine work of Christ, x. 312
- President of the Jewish Council*, xii. 174
- Press*, the, power of, in South America, noticed, viii. 232, *et seq.* See *Liberty of the press.*
- Presumption*, a great evil, iv. 30—a powerful temptation of Satan, iv. 37—an evil widely diffused, iv. 359—manifested in opposing the extent of divine law, iv. 359, 360—denying the verity of Christian experience, iv. 360—questioning the method of pardon, iv. 362—wrestling with God in our appointments in life, iv. 363—and in the feelings of good men, iv. 365
- Presumptuous sins*, under the law, described, xi. 92
- Price*, Richard, D. D., F. R. S., on the ground of moral obligation, ix. 93—his refutation of Hume, ix. 108
- Pride*, raises the judgments of God, iii. 474—and darkens the heart, iv. 141
- Prideaux*, Dean, his “Connexion of the History of the Old Testament,” &c., referred to, vi. 120—his account of the Sibylline verses, ix. 51; and of Zoroaster, ix. 53—his “Life of Mahomet,” referred to, ix. 162—his remark on the condition of the Edomites, xi. 333
- Priesthood*, why their garments were white, ii. 473—an important duty of the, iv. 510
- *of Christ*, attested on the cross, iii. 397—importance of the doctrine of, iv. 275; viii. 116, *et seq.*—great evil of rejecting it, iv. 276—exhibits the connexion between the Old and New Testament, iv. 276—displays the harmony of the two dispensations iv. 278—great absurdity of denying the, iv. 281—constitutes Christianity the religion of mankind, iv. 281—inferior character of Christianity without this doctrine, iv. 284—is seen “within the veil,” iv. 323—in what this Priesthood consists, iv. 323–325—the gift of the Spirit, the result of, iv. 325
- Priestley*, Joseph, LL. D., on the insufficiency of human reason, vii. 49—fallacy of his argument, that thought is the result of organization, ix. 474—on the doctrine of the Trinity,

- x. 115—his views of the non-importance of the doctrine, examined, x. 116, *et seq.*—and of the inspiration of Scripture, x. 117—his ridiculous notions respecting the term “Angel of the Lord,” x. 169—on the title “Jehovah,” given to Christ, x. 190—on the Scriptures which refer to the eternity of the Son of God, x. 232—on the Logos of Philo, x. 276—his attempts to evade the force of Stephen’s prayer, x. 319—finds fault with the style of the Apostles, x. 372—his remarks on the vicarious character of the death of Christ, xi. 31—his assertion that the doctrine of redemption is inconsistent with the freeness of divine grace, refuted, xi. 57
- Priests*, identity of the order of, with that of Bishops, v. 264–266—parents are priests in their own families, xii. 141
- Primasius* quoted, on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 208
- Primate*, office of, in the church, xii. 177—reason of the appointment, xii. 177–179
- Primitive Christians*, great lovers of the Scriptures, ii. 358
- *church*, neglected her day of visitation, iv. 9—the composition of the, stated, xii. 169—formed upon the model of the Jewish synagogue, xii. 174—mode of conducting worship in the, xii. 175—ancient independency of, and subsequent union of the early churches, xii. 185—character of that independency, xii. 186. See *Christian church*, *Church government*.
- *paradise*, nature of the, iii. 68—contrasted with the heavenly, iii. 73—shut against man, iii. 351—how it is guarded, iii. 354—in what respects it is opened again, iii. 358—how the event took place, iii. 358—how far it may be regained, iii. 360—how far its re-possession is conditional, iii. 361—the law of paradise considered, vi. 31—curse of man’s expulsion therefrom, vi. 343. See *Heavenly paradise*.
- Primitive sacrifices*, considered, xi. 117, *et seq.*—their expiatory character, xi. 117, 156, *et seq.*—corroborated by the distribution of animals into clean and unclean, xi. 117, 156, *et seq.*—by the prohibition of blood, as food, xi. 118—and by the sacrifice of animal victims, xi. 120—the sacrifice of Abel, considered, xi. 121, *et seq.*—why the history of the institution of, is so brief, xi. 138, *et seq.*—indicated by the first promise made to man, xi. 140—remarks on the divine origin of, xi. 158, 163—the idea that they were eucharistic offerings, refuted, xi. 159, *et seq.* See *Sacrifice*, &c.
- *state of man*, considered, x. 385, *et seq.*
- Principle*, importance of, in all works undertaken for God, ii. 347—triumphs of, over error, described, iii. 198—importance of being governed by sound, iv. 351
- Printing*, made to advance the cause of the Son of God, ii. 299
- Prisoners of hope*, in what sense Christians are said to be, iii. 179
- *of war*, ancient treatment of, xii. 110, *et seq.*
- Pritchard*, John, M.D., on the rash hypothesis, that the negro is the connecting link between the man and ape, x. 53
- Private prayer*, the nature and importance of, xii. 64
- Privileges*, religious, do not exempt the possessor from punishment, ii. 402—a proper estimate of, taken, iv. 45
- Probation*, a state of, proof of the longsuffering of God, iii.



- 364—man's state of, considered, x. 416
- Prodigal son*, design of the parable of the, iv. 60—an illustration of, vi. 182
- Prodigies*, nature of the, which occurred at the crucifixion, iii. 398
- Prohibition* under which our progenitors were placed, considered, x. 422—the question whether it was a positive or a moral precept, examined, x. 423
- Promise of the Father*, import of the phrase, iii. 379
- Promises*, made to us, which we do not obtain, ii. 455—prayers of the Apostles considered as promises, ii. 458—way in which the promises are to be claimed, ii. 461–463—given to us as individuals, ii. 462—in what respects they are “exceeding great and precious,” iii. 295—illustration of the first promise of the Redeemer, ix. 250
- Properties of God*, meaning of the term, ix. 461
- Property*, one of the natural rights of man, xii. 109
- Prophecy*, value and importance of, ii. 2—confirms the assurance of the success of the Gospel, ii. 18—a proof of the certainty of the knowledge of Christ, iii. 47—double sense of, iii. 233; ix. 248—the term explained, iii. 233; vi. 160; xii. 323—scripture evidence in proof of, strong and decisive, iii. 270—fulfilled, a seal upon the claims of Christ, iii. 309—an evidence of divine inspiration, iii. 309—the evidence of, increasingly strong, iii. 312—the phrase, “to seal up the prophecy,” explained, iii. 391—eminently fulfilled in the crucifixion, iii. 395—great object of, iii. 395—chasm in, filled up by the New Testament, iv. 154—rule for the general interpretation of, iv. 478—character of scripture predictions, vi. 156–161—fulfilment of, has confirmed the faith of men in all ages, vi. 158—increasing force of the evidence of, vi. 159—the leading purpose of prophecy, vi. 159—acknowledged obscurity of, vi. 160—prophecies of the book of the Revelation, considered, vi. 325, *et seq.*—an external evidence of revelation, ix. 117, *et seq.*—contrasted with miracles as evidence, ix. 124—no real prediction uttered by evil spirits, ix. 227—general observations on those of Scripture, ix. 242, *et seq.*—on the supposed obscurity and style of, ix. 246—moral ends of, ix. 247—prominent topic of the prophecies of the Old Testament, ix. 255, *et seq.*—predictions concerning Christ, considered, ix. 261, *et seq.*; xii. 324, *et seq.*; xii. 329—objections to the evidence of, answered, ix. 267—not written subsequent to the events predicted, ix. 267, *et seq.*—contrasted with the oracles of Heathenism, ix. 271—fallacy of the attempt to prove that some prophecies of Scripture have failed, ix. 273—peculiar character of the prophecies of revelation, x. 11, *et seq.*—how a proof of the divine commission of a man, xii. 324—examples specified, xii. 324, *et seq.*
- Prophecy*, in what sense Ministers of the Gospel are said to prophesy, ii. 9—men can only prophesy truly as inspired by God, iii. 47
- Prophets*, general mode of teaching they adopted, ii. 41—were specially appointed to their work, iii. 87—their induction, contrasted with that of the Saviour, iii. 87—doctrines of, confirmed by the transfiguration of Christ, iii. 90—difference of their manner before and after the captivity, iii. 121

- wonderful nature of the prophetic dispensation, iii. 122—exalted character of the Prophets, iii. 122—contrasted with the poets of the world, iii. 122—why called “seers,” iii. 123—dispensation of, preparatory to the Christian, iii. 272—of the Old Testament, described, vi. 105—sons of the, what, vi. 104—schools of the, vi. 105—inflexible character of the, vi. 105—nature of their ministrations, vi. 106—not arranged in chronological order, vi. 166—manner in which their messages were often delivered, vi. 169—why they wrought fewer miracles than Christ, vi. 177—were temporary Ministers in the primitive church, vi. 284—character of the, defended, ix. 272—significant actions of, noticed, ix. 280; xii. 363—their views of the Deity of the Holy Spirit, x. 364—nature of the office of, in the primitive church, xii. 170—defended from ridicule, xii. 363
- Propitiation*, meaning of the term, xi. 38—death of Christ, a, xi. 38—doctrine of, consistent with the tender and placable character of the divine Being, xi. 41—scripture proof of the propitiatory character of the death of Christ, xi. 43, *et seq.* See *Atonement, Sacrifice, &c.*
- Proselytes*, doubts respecting the baptism of, alluded to, x. 368
- Προσκαρτεροῦντες*, import of, xii. 54
- Προσκυνειν*, explained, x. 315
- Prosperity*, occasionally the lot of great offenders, considered, x. 102
- Prostration*, not the worship paid to Christ, x. 317
- Protestants*, their general ignorance of the Popish controversy, vii. 442—benefits resulting from its revival, vii. 442—the apathy of Protestantism respecting it, deplored, vii. 443—erroneous notion of, respecting Popery, vii. 443—duty of, in regard to the Church of Rome, vii. 453
- Proverbs*, the Book of, written by Solomon, character of, vi. 164—the book entitled, “A Collection of the Proverbs of all Nations,” alluded to, vi. 164—the inspiration of, asserted, x. 234
- Providence of God*, the duty of acknowledging God in the dispensations of, ii. 34—a definition of the term, ii. 200—doctrine of particular Providence consistent with Scripture and reason, ii. 203—misconceptions of an opposite theory, stated, ii. 205—particular Providence not dependent on the law of nature, ii. 207—its exercise on all occasions manifests wisdom and feeling, ii. 208—displayed in the formation of religious opinion, ii. 209—advances the scheme of redemption, ii. 297—special providences, a day of the Lord’s power, ii. 311—the inheritance of the saints, ii. 377—a doctrine annihilated by polytheism, ii. 484—dispensations of, intended to mature principles of holiness, iii. 11—has appointed to every man his work, iii. 19—end of dispensations of, iii. 24—daily explained to the Christian, iii. 52—benefits of contemplating the, iii. 105—as beheld by the glorified, iii. 106—the kingdom of, described, iii. 190—St. Paul’s submission to, iii. 230—eminently seen by persevering piety, iii. 263—secrets of, known only to God, iii. 324—marks of, in the preservation of truth, iv. 247—revolutions of, compared to those of a wheel, iv. 262—perplexed character of the dispensations of, iv. 264—Southey sneers at the doctrine of a special Providence, v. 371—the scripture

- doctrine of, viii. 420—dispensations of, beneficial to the good, viii. 457—why termed “trials,” viii. 458—and how they tend to the salvation of man, viii. 459—the scripture doctrine of, unknown to the ancient philosophers, ix. 28 ; xii. 313—sentiments of, concerning, noticed, ix. 65—the kind of providence discovered in the writings of Homer and Virgil, characterized, ix. 66—Dr. Beattie’s remarks upon, ix. 338—the extent of, ix. 368—a special benefit of the atonement, xii. 13—vague notions of, entertained by the Heathen, xii. 313
- Prudence*, motives to benevolence, addressed to, ii. 357—prudent anticipation of evil, a motive to exertion, ii. 357
- Psalm tunes*, what kind of, proper, viii. 324
- Psalms*, the Book of, why attributed to David, vi. 163—the authors who are known, vi. 163—why they were composed, vi. 163—Bishop Horne’s opinion respecting the, vi. 164—meaning of the word “Selah,” found in connexion with them, vi. 164—sung during the paschal ceremony, vi. 236—on the inapplicability of the forty-fifth to Solomon, x. 211
- Psammis*, the tomb of, described, ix. 49
- Public worship*, great value of, in the church and world, ii. 410—moral consequences resulting from, ii. 412—the most perfect type of heaven upon earth, iii. 214—a gift of Christ, iv. 125—the obligation of, considered, xii. 70—the ancient proceedings of, xii. 70—examples and precepts, enforcing the duty, stated, xii. 70, 71—ends contemplated in the institution of, xii. 71. See *Worship*.
- Publicans*, who they were, vi. 190
- Puffendorf*, on the origin of natural law, ix. 37
- Punishment*, future, the penalty of disobedience, vi. 39—vague notions of, entertained by the ancient Heathen, ix. 67 ; xii. 313—scripture view of the eternity of, ix. 291 ; xii. 353
- Punitive justice*, defined, x. 99—the strictness and severity of, noticed, xi. 7
- Purity*, a mark of Christianity, iii. 104—a peculiar feature of the heavenly state, iii. 157—a blessing flowing from the death of Christ, iii. 315—lost by the fall, iii. 352
- *of God*, suggests no way of pardon for the guilty, ii. 322—of Christ, described, iii. 247—noticed, ix. 368
- Pythagoras*, his notion of a divine providence, ix. 66—the pretended miracles of, examined, ix. 232
- Pythian oracle*, the ambiguity and servility of the, xii. 363
- Python*, the serpent of the Greek mythology, described, ix. 49
- Q.
- Quakers*, sentiments of, on baptism, xii. 223
- *in Russia*, dissenters from the Greek Church, described, viii. 196
- Quartermere*, M., “*Sur la Langue et Litterature de l’Egypte*,” noticed, viii. 162
- Quintilian*, his misery, arising from improper notions of the justice of God, x. 103
- R.
- Rabbins*, views of, on the doctrine of the resurrection, xii. 23
- Radbert*, the Monk, the inventor of the doctrine of transubstantiation, vii. 458
- Rahab*, the harlot, nature of her faith, xi. 152
- Rain*, the former and latter, described, vi. 177

- Rainbow**, the sign of God's covenant with Noah, iv. 273; vi. 57—the appearance of, in Ezekiel's vision, illustrated, iv. 273; vi. 57—its natural character, alluded to, vi. 57
- Ramsay**, the Chevalier, his theory respecting the foreknowledge of God, examined, x. 10
- Randolph**, Thomas, D.D., on the Arian hypothesis, on the term "Angel of the Lord," x. 168—on the law ordained by angels, x. 187—on the import of the term "God," x. 201
- Rangoon**, occupation of, by the British troops, viii. 87
- Ransom**, or price of redemption, defined, xi. 114. See *Atone-ment*.
- Ray**, John, M.A., his "Wisdom of God in the Creation," referred to, ix. 403; x. 50
- Reason**, use of reason in matters of revelation, i. 233; vi. 9; vii. 59—doctrines of revelation not contrary to, but above reason, i. 236—danger and absurdity of submitting the doctrines of revelation to the decision of human reason, i. 241; vii. 52; ix. 133—of man, darkened by sin, ii. 211—insufficiency of, to discover the knowledge of God, iv. 187—powers of, a proof of an immaterial principle in man, vi. 29—incompetency of human reason, as a standard to determine the sense of Scripture, vii. 45, *et seq.*—on the ever-varying opinion of, vii. 48—Dr. Priestley on the insufficiency of, vii. 49—Dr. Adam Clarke's position that the doctrines of Scripture are doctrines of eternal reason, investigated, vii. 50—on the imperfection of, vii. 50 (n)—nature of reason, even when aided by revelation, vii. 55—the boundary of human reason, vii. 57—the position that no man should believe doctrines which contradict reason, examined, vii. 62, *et seq.*; ix. 133—import of the term "reason," thus employed, vii. 67, *et seq.*—doctrine of transubstantiation contrary to reason, in a different sense when compared with doctrines referring to the divine nature, vii. 71—human reason and eternal reason not the same, vii. 50, *et seq.*—how far they approximate, vii. 72—true position of reason in revelation, vii. 74, *et seq.*—fatal effects in Germany of the exaltation of, vii. 178—weakness of, a proof of the necessity of revelation, ix. 19—inability to discover the will of God by rational induction, ix. 24; xii. 309—on the supposed improved state of, ix. 94, 95—use and limitation of, in religion, ix. 130, *et seq.*—by what it is limited, ix. 140—the province of, defined, ix. 142–144—not sufficient to teach the knowledge of God, ix. 372; xii. 309—why men who reject the Bible, ascribe great power to human reason, xii. 310—on the acknowledged ignorance of the ancient sages, xii. 311—the self-sufficiency of philosophy, xii. 311—weakness of, a cause of ridiculous errors in religion, xii. 311—on the Scripture requiring the belief of things incomprehensible to reason, xii. 366
- Rebuke**, meaning of the phrase, "He shall rebuke many nations," iii. 279
- Rechabites**, fulfilment of prediction concerning, vi. 157
- Reconciliation**, meaning of the term, iii. 388; xi. 44—the phrase "reconciliation for iniquity," explained, iii. 389—scripture view of the doctrine of, ix. 297, *et seq.*—death of Christ, a, xi. 43—scripture proof of, xi. 43—the evangelical sense of the term, xi. 46—fallacy of the assertion that God is nowhere said to be

- reconciled to us, xi. 48—conditions of this reconciliation, xi. 50—Socinian objection to the doctrine, refuted, xi. 50
- Red Sea*, dividing of the, considered, ix. 204, *et seq.*; xii. 221, 338
- “*Redeem*,” import of the term, xi. 51
- Redeemed*, the, character of, iii. 104—their future state, iii. 105—employment of, in heaven, iii. 109
- Redeemer*, why the earth was made for him, ii. 286—how far the promises concerning, were understood by the patriarchs, vi. 39—names of God as a Redeemer, considered, x. 60—why Moses was so called, xi. 54—contrast between Moses and Christ in the character of, xi. 54. See *Christ*.
- Redemption*, scheme of, why laid before the foundation of the world, ii. 285—theatre of, the world, ii. 286—the question how far worlds above us are benefited by, considered, ii. 289—how angels are benefited by the work of, ii. 290—in what respect a covenant-engagement, ii. 293—plan of, laid before the foundation of the world, ii. 294; viii. 430—how it operates upon individual men, ii. 294; and upon nations, ii. 295—all agencies harmonize in effecting, ii. 297—extent of, a proof of our resurrection, ii. 389—meaning of the term, ii. 389—twofold redemption, described, ii. 389—import of the term, iii. 104; xi. 51, 53—how accomplished by the death of Christ, iii. 248—of all men, contemplated in the death of Christ, iii. 416—the plan of, iv. 26—and how cherished from eternity, iv. 168—a strong reason of love to Christ, iv. 451—character of, x. 60—a stupendous proof of the goodness of God, x. 60—harmonizes with the principles of the moral government of God, xi. 3, *et seq.*—scripture proof of our redemption by Christ, xi. 51—subjects of, xi. 52—objections to the scripture doctrine of, considered, xi. 53, *et seq.*—does not imply the absurdity of paying a price to the devil, xi. 55, 56—is consistent with the freeness of divine grace, xi. 57—price of man’s redemption, defined, xi. 114—the great object of, described, xi. 167—extent of, considered, xi. 270, *et seq.*—passages of Scripture supposed to limit the extent of the efficacy of, xi. 378, *et seq.*
- Reformation*, the day of, a day of the power of Christ, ii. 310—instruments employed, peculiarly adapted for their work, ii. 447—the period of, predicted in the Apocalypse, iv. 155—blessed effects resulting from the, iv. 155—personal reformation the way to happiness, iv. 499—immediate effects of the, in this country, v. 61—fatal effects of a contempt for the Divines of the, evinced in Germany, vii. 176—attributed by Peyran to the fidelity of the Vaudois, vii. 459—character of the singing and music of the, viii. 323, 325—individual reformation not sufficient to secure pardon of sin, ix. 296—moral inadequacy of, ix. 298
- “*Reformed Church*,” import of the term, xi. 415—tenets of Calvin generally held by the, xi. 418—leading schemes of predestination prevalent in the, xi. 418—views of the, concerning the eucharist, xii. 293
- Reformers*, powerful preachers and writers, ii. 358
- Refuge*, God the only one, from a guilty conscience, iii. 450; and from slavish fear, iv. 27—fleeing for refuge to the hope set before us, importance of, iv. 330

- Regeneration*, defined, viii. 255; xi. 230, 249—does not precede justification, xi. 229—a concomitant of justification, xi. 248, *et seq.*—preparatory process of, xi. 250—how it is proved to accompany justification, xi. 250, *et seq.*—how far connected with sanctification, xii. 10
- Reid*, Thomas, D.D., his "Essays on the Powers of the Human Mind," noticed, i. 379—on the fallacy of Hume's theory concerning cause and effect, ix. 383—on the phrase, "law of nature," ix. 384
- Relative duties*, powerfully inculcated by Christianity, iii. 496—498—attention to, necessary to happiness, iv. 501—ancient regard to, noticed, iv. 502—amply considered, xii. 142, *et seq.*
- Religion*, an instructive test of our religious pretensions, noticed, ii. 81—practical nature of true religion, ii. 274—of Christ, is one of the heart, ii. 325—the awful grandeur of, ii. 328—strangely mistaken, on account of idolatry, ii. 482—not to be viewed merely as a system of restraint and discipline, iii. 10—implies true conversion, iii. 44—a subject of serious choice, iii. 187—fundamental truths of, exhibited to the world in divine worship, iii. 212—founded upon knowledge, iii. 237—why compared to a yoke, iii. 254—the conditions, restraints, and services of, iii. 254, 255—increasingly demonstrated to persevering piety, iii. 261—mysteries of, known fully to God, iii. 326—requires no singularity, iii. 372—a personal engagement, iii. 436—practical character of, rejected by the Jews, iv. 4—true key to all the false religion in the world, stated, iv. 64—awful state of, when Christ appeared, iv. 335—inward religion, described, iv. 347, *et seq.*; viii. 418—inward and outward religion, contrasted, iv. 355—revivals of, in America, described, v. 218–221—import of the word "religion," vi. 6; viii. 418—the grounds of, specified, vi. 6—the distinction of natural and revealed, vi. 7—how these phrases were introduced into theological language, vi. 7—use of reason in, stated, vi. 9—the ground and reason of, vi. 341—object of, vi. 342; viii. 381—men less influenced by knowledge in religion than in other affairs, vii. 216—power of, in ameliorating the moral condition of man, vii. 273—ought not to be separated from education, vii. 396—carried into almost every thing by our ancestors, vii. 509—how fearfully corrupted, viii. 3—man only capable of, viii. 418—truths of, never alluded to as the result of rational investigation, ix. 26—common origin of, proved by the universality of sacrifice, ix. 35—transmission of, from the flood, ix. 38, *et seq.*, 75—preserved and propagated by the Jews, ix. 33, *et seq.*—great source of corruption in, to what attributed, ix. 58—use and limitation of reason in, ix. 130, *et seq.*—absolutely necessary to civilization, ix. 374—proof of the common origin of, xii. 309—ridiculous errors in, the result of the insufficiency of human reason, xii. 311
- Religious decay*, how prevented in the church of Christ, vii. 183—insufficiency of mere orthodoxy, as a barrier against corruption, vii. 184
- *doubting*, character of, defined, i. 112—various kinds of, iii. 421—considered as an injury, iii. 422—the unreasonableness of, described, iii. 424–426

- Religious instruction of slaves*, can only be effectually communicated to negroes by Christian Missionaries, i. 592—correspondence with Mr. Buxton on this subject, i. 594-596—means of, inadequate to the necessities of the West Indies, vi. 443—opposition to, of the anti-Mission party, noticed, vi. 444—concessions in favour of, wrung from the colonists, vi. 445
- *liberty*, value and beneficial effects of, vii. 185—imperfectly known in Germany, vii. 186
- *pursuits*, a mode of re-deeming the time, iv. 199
- *toleration*, progress of, in South America, viii. 229, *et seq.*
- Remonstrants*, remarks on the opinions of the, vii. 500—on the doctrine of original sin, x. 438—and justification by faith, xi. 221
- Remunerative justice*, defined, x. 98
- Rennell*, Thomas, M.A., his "Remarks on Scepticism," quoted, ix. 479—on the inconsistency of matter with mental phenomena, ix. 481-483
- Repent*, the phrase, "It repented the Lord," explained, vi. 55—how consistent with the immutability of God, x. 43
- Repentance*, promoted by retirement and meditation, ii. 264—necessary to the re-possession of paradise, iii. 360—a fruit of the Holy Spirit, iv. 84—distinguishing elements of, iv. 313—in a corrupted state of the church, considered meritorious, iv. 362—the only preparation for the reception of Christ, iv. 478; vi. 180—nature of true repentance, iv. 479—is considered but preparatory, iv. 479—views of, entertained in the early Minutes of the Methodist Conference, v. 160—extract from the Homily on, v. 395, 489—the first step toward God, vi. 345—a work of the Holy Spirit, vi. 346—evangelical repentance, described, vi. 347—in what the efficacy of, consists, vi. 348—its relative connexion with salvation, vii. 196; xi. 232—views of, entertained by the Assembly's Catechism, vii. 196—the true ground of, stated, vii. 197—embarrassment consequent on the Calvinistic notions of repentance, vii. 198, 199—cannot alone secure pardon, ix. 295—insufficiency of, to constitute a fitness for forgiveness, xi. 16—does not change the relation of the guilty toward God, xi. 16—the true nature of, described, xi. 18, *et seq.*, 230—in what respect it is necessary to justification, xi. 231—not two kinds of, enjoined upon man, xi. 294
- Representative*, Christ our, in the presence of God, iv. 324
- "*Respect of persons*," meaning of the phrase, xi. 354
- Rest*, of the soul after death, nature of the; iii. 28—from religious labour, enjoyed in heaven, iii. 29; and also from religious fears, iii. 30—the spiritual and heavenly rest, iii. 441—when God should be sought as our rest, iii. 453
- Restoration of the Jews*, after frequent falls, to the true religion, results of, ix. 41—to the city of Jerusalem, considered, ix. 259, *et seq.*
- Restraint*, the Gospel, a system of, iv. 42
- Resurrection of the body*, a doctrine clearly revealed in the Gospel, ii. 384; iii. 427; xii. 17—a portion of primitive theology, ii. 385—unknown in every system of Paganism, ii. 385—termed by the Heathen, "the hope of a worm," ii. 388—the identity of the human body at the resurrection, ii.

388 ; xii. 23—the resurrection of Christ, a pledge of ours, ii. 389—proved by the extent of redemption, ii. 389 ; by the Scriptures, ii. 390 ; by the term “sleep,” as used in the New Testament, ii. 390 ; by the great designation of Jesus Christ, ii. 391—the doctrine of, implies no more death, ii. 392—the doctrine not attempted to be proved by St. Paul, in 1 Cor. xv., ii. 393 ; xii. 18—import of his argument there, xii. 18—a doctrine not deducible from reason, ii. 393—all objections answered by the power of God, ii. 395—illustrations of, in the arrangements of nature and providence, ii. 395, 396—state of the wicked and the good at the resurrection, contrasted, ii. 396—encouragement afforded by this doctrine, ii. 397—this hope, how illustrated by St. Paul, iii. 132—period when it shall take place, iii. 133—the revealed hope of a pious believer, iii. 138—Paul’s eloquent discourse on the doctrine, vi. 271, 272—his mode of conducting the argument in favour of, viii. 41—the truth well-known to the Patriarchs and Jews, viii. 42—analogies employed by St. Paul, alluded to, viii. 44—ancient objections to the doctrine, viii. 44—two theories respecting the, referred to, xii. 17—a miraculous work, xii. 17—how it will be accomplished, not revealed, xii. 22—the theory of an incorruptible *germ*, or *stamen*, considered, xii. 23 ; from whence derived, xii. 23—opinions of the early fathers on the resurrection, xii. 23—absurdity of the *germ* theory, exhibited, xii. 24—objection to the doctrine, from the changes of the substance of the body during life, xii. 25  
*Resurrection of Christ*, importance

of the doctrine of, ii. 260—a proof of our resurrection, ii. 389—one of the seals set to the claims of the Messiah, iii. 312—absurd tale concerning the Roman guard, vi. 214 ; ix. 212—indisputable proofs of the resurrection, vi. 214 ; ix. 212—circumstances of the, examined, ix. 208, *et seq.*

*Retirement*, necessary to the attainment of self-knowledge, ii. 262 ; to a just estimate of the world, ii. 263 ; and to the promotion of holiness, ii. 264—habitual retirement, recommended, ii. 265—leads to union with God, ii. 265—prepares for heaven, ii. 267—evils attending its neglect, ii. 267—*Revealed things*, what they are, iii. 330—how they belong to us, iii. 335

*Revelation*, danger of submitting the mysterious doctrines of, to the judgment and decision of human reason, i. 241—God only known to man by, ii. 437—perfect character of that given to man, ii. 437—of God in the works of nature, ii. 438 ; and in the giving of the law, ii. 438—is complete and comprehensive, iii. 319—to reveal a special work of God, iii. 329—nature of that, which God has vouchsafed to man, iii. 330—of man, what, iii. 331—of Christ, what, iii. 332—of a future state, what, iii. 334—practical results of, specified, iii. 336—mysterious character of, iv. 145—of God, taught by Christ, iv. 187—harmony of, from the fall of man to the advent of Christ, iv. 280—can only make known the things of God, iv. 397—the absurdity of rejecting, iv. 397—400—deference to be paid to revelation, iv. 400—is only understood by the aid of the Holy Spirit, iv. 402—404—all communication of divine truth is from God, iv. 508—man’s



duty to acquaint himself with, iv. 509; and communicate it to others, iv. 510—when committed to writing, vi. 16—of the will of God, how made, ix. 11—necessity of, proved from the weakness of human reason, ix. 19, *et seq.*; from the state of religious knowledge among the Heathen, ix. 60, *et seq.*; from the state of morals among the Heathen, ix. 75, *et seq.*; and from the religious systems of Paganism, ix. 82, *et seq.*; characteristics of that granted to man, ix. 86—harmonizes with the Jewish dispensation, ix. 87—should be properly authenticated, ix. 88—inconveniences under which that laboured, which was made to the Patriarchs, ix. 90—should provide for its effectual promulgation, ix. 90, *et seq.*—not to be monopolized, ix. 91—external evidence of, ix. 96—internal evidence of, ix. 97, 121, *et seq.*, 283—collateral evidence of, what, ix. 97; 121, *et seq.*, 283—the term “revelation,” defined, ix. 97, 121, *et seq.* 283; xii. 303—importance of the proof of, ix. 98—use and limitation of reason in, considered, ix. 130, *et seq.*—on the difficulties of, ix. 327—and natural philosophy, contrasted, ix. 331—necessary to ascertain the existence of God, ix. 375, *et seq.*—great duty of man to receive it, x. 121—nature of that made to the Patriarchs, xi. 140—*et seq.*—inequality with which it was made to the world, xi. 169—to whom revelations have been made, xii. 304; and which have been recorded, xii. 304—necessity of, argued from the existence of a moral law, xii. 307, *et seq.*—evidence by which a revelation may be proved to be divine, xii. 318, *et seq.*—modes by

which revelations have been made, xii. 318

*Revelation*, the book of, peculiar character of, iii. 61, 103—mysteries of, adverted to, iv. 13, 14—when communicated to the Apostle John, vi. 324—the general design of, vi. 324—import of the prophecies of the book, vi. 325, *et seq.*—its edifying character, vi. 327—sentiments of Sir Isaac Newton, concerning, vi. 328—the beautiful imagery of, vi. 328

*Revenge*, regarded as a virtue by the ancients, ix. 78; xii. 315

*Reverence*, a principle of true worship, iii. 208—of God, habitually to be encouraged, viii. 390—a duty which children owe their parents, xii. 138. See *Veneration*.

*Revivals of religion*, in America, characterized, v. 218–221

*Revolution*, of France, alluded to, xii. 162—of England, in 1688, xii. 163

*Rewards*, future, of heaven, distributed according to the character of those who receive them, iii. 32—different in degree, iii. 33—the period of entering upon, fixed, iii. 34—nature of, described, iii. 109—vague notions of, entertained by the ancient Heathen, ix. 67

*Rhameses V.*, a description of the tomb of, viii. 187

*Rich*, the, were not the best members of the primitive church, ii. 317

*Rich*, Claudius J., his “Memoir on the Ruins of Babylon,” referred to, ix. 260; xii. 328

*Richardson*, Henry, Esq., author of “The Persian and Arabic Dictionary,” his remarks upon Zoroaster alluded to, ix. 53

———, Robert, M. D., his “Travels along the Mediterranean,” &c., reviewed, vii. 336–349—character of, as a traveller, vii. 337—on the Zodiac of Dendera, vii. 343; ix. 340; xii. 368—on the present state

- of Christianity in Jerusalem, vii. 347—on the extent of ancient Egypt, ix. 278
- Ridgeley*, Rev. Mr., his view of the divine immutability, examined, x. 45—on the nature of a sacrament, xii. 220
- Righteous*, death of the, frequently a judgment upon others, iii. 7—his death an act of mercy to himself, iii. 8—his life prolonged in mercy to others, iii. 9; and often to himself also, iii. 9—God is glorified in the death of, iii. 9, 10—complicated nature of the afflictions of, iii. 11
- Righteousness*, an immutable principle of the divine government, ii. 279—phrase "everlasting righteousness" explained, iii. 390—by faith, a gift of Christ, iv. 123—on the imputation of faith for righteousness, considered, xi. 203, *et seq.*—import of the term, xi. 211. See *Justification*.
- 
- of Christ*, illustrated by his divinity and incarnation, iii. 165—by his death, his work in the hearts of his people, iii. 166—and by his conduct towards his church, iii. 167
- 
- of God*, general meaning of the phrase, ii. 279; xi. 195—why the Gospel is so termed, iii. 390—in his judicial and penal visitations, asserted, xi. 7—how displayed in the justification of the sinner, xi. 64, 66, *et seq.*—the scriptural interpretation of the term, xi. 195, *et seq.*
- "*Rise again*," scriptural meaning of the phrase, ii. 388
- Ritchie*, J., D.D., on the expiatory character of the patriarchal sacrifices, xi. 157
- Rites*, figurative, common to Christianity and Paganism, ii. 327—sacrificial rites, how performed among the Jews, ii. 408—of all nations, bear proof of a common origin, iii. 458—
- public, and commemorative, a means of communicating the knowledge of a revelation, ix. 91
- Robertson*, William, D.D., his "History of America" referred to, on the prevalency of human sacrifice, ix. 83
- Robinson*, Mark, his "Observations on the System of Wesleyan Methodism," reviewed, vii. 129, *et seq.*—historical recollections of his authorship, vii. 130—causes of his secession from the Methodist body, vii. 131—becomes a church Methodist, vii. 131—attempts to place Methodism under the control of the Clergy, vii. 132—great absurdity of the project, vii. 146, *et seq.*—its fatal consequences, vii. 149—his grave quibbling on the legislative power of the Methodist Conference, vii. 152, *et seq.*—recommends the admission of lay-representatives into Conference, vii. 159
- 
- , Robert, his character as a Dissenter, vii. 426—on the ancient custom of baptizing naked, xii. 271
- Rock*, scripture comparison of a, iv. 24—in what respects God is a rock to his people, iv. 24—28—smitten in the wilderness, a type of Christ, vi. 200
- Rod of strength*, import of the phrase, ii. 308—the miracle of the rod of Moses, xii. 321
- Romans*, their invasion of Judea predicted, vi. 92—interfere in the affairs of the Jews, vi. 131—often termed Gentiles, vi. 205—why Paul called himself a Roman, vi. 245—murdered men in their pastimes, ix. 76—their feast of Floralia, ix. 83—power of parents over their children, among the, xii. 143—leading men among the, denied the immortality of the soul, xii. 313
- 
- , the Epistle to, distinguishing character of, ii. 269;

- vi. 255—the grand doctrines taught, vi. 255—abounds in exhortations to various graces and duties, vi. 264—free from allusions to Gnosticism, viii. 33—date of the, viii. 34—importance of the 8th chapter of, viii. 453—illustration of the 9th, 10th, and 11th chapters of, xi. 311, *et seq.*—Calvinistic objections to these illustrations, considered, xi. 335, *et seq.*
- Rome*, church at, Paul's regard for the, ii. 268—why he desired to visit it, ii. 269—the character of the church, ii. 274—notice of it, as fallen, ii. 274—a church there prior to the visit of Paul, vi. 251
- , the Church of, character of, as fallen, ii. 274—the rise of, predicted, iv. 155—insufficient to arrest the progress of infidelity, iv. 249—why so few converted from, to Protestantism, v. 153—a comparison traced between, and the Methodists, by Southey, v. 430—her notion of the worship of angels, condemned, vi. 297—the term “man of sin,” applicable to her, vi. 300—the apostasy of, described, vi. 300—her struggles for ascendancy, vii. 442—benefit resulting from a revival of the Popish controversy, vii. 442—apathy of Protestants respecting the, vii. 443—the prolific parent of infidelity, vii. 444—in harmonious juxtaposition with infidelity, vii. 445—not to be successfully opposed by the “spirit of the age,” vii. 445 ; or by education, vii. 446—has not any right to the term “Catholic,” vii. 447—the Papists are idolaters, vii. 448 ; their awful situation, vii. 448—spiritual weapons only successful against Popery, vii. 449—importance of a knowledge of the principles of, vii. 450—tracts against the, reviewed, vii. 451—duty of Protestants in regard to, vii. 453—never was a universal church, vii. 454—did not fall all at once into her corrupted state, vii. 456—quotation from an ancient form of baptism, vii. 456—why opposed to the circulation of the Bible, vii. 457—history of transubstantiation, vii. 458—controversy in, on the dogmas of Augustine, vii. 480—boldness of the Priests of, before Kings, vii. 507—a fearful corruption of Christianity, viii. 5—demoralizing tendency of, viii. 5—withering influence of, in Spain and Portugal, viii. 83—effects of the revolutions in South America upon her, viii. 216—alluded to in the Epistle to the Thessalonians, ix. 222—signs and wonders of, considered, ix. 222, *et seq.*—the pretended miracles of, examined, ix. 232—their notion of a superior and inferior worship, x. 331—the errors of, on the subject of justification, xi. 221, 223, 226—her views of the unity of the church, unscriptural, xii. 185 ; and unsupported by antiquity, xii. 185—her extravagant use of power, alluded to, xii. 199—doubts the infallibility of the four general Councils, xii. 201—absurdity of, on the subject of sacraments, xii. 214—view of, respecting the nature of sacraments, stated, xii. 215 ; and exposed as flagrantly anti-scriptural, xii. 216, 217—views of, on the nature of baptism, xii. 222—monstrous theory of, concerning the eucharist, xii. 288, *et seq.*
- Roscoe*, William, Esq., Mr. Watson's letter to, i. 87 ; vi. 365—420—his character, i. 87—charged with libelling the character of England, vi. 366—condemns the policy of the war with France, and why, vi.

- 369, 370—approves of the French revolution, vi. 371—his view of the peace of Amiens, vi. 376—is offended with the liberty of the press, vi. 380—animadverts on the policy of Mr. Pitt, vi. 390, *et seq.*—general tendency of his political views and conduct, vi. 394—eulogizes Mr. Fox for refusing to become an accomplice in a murder, vi. 396, 397—his arguments in favour of a peace with France, controverted, vi. 411, *et seq.*
- Rose*, Hugh James, M.A., his discourses on “The State of the Protestant Religion in Germany,” reviewed, vii. 173–188—his reflections on the rationalism prevailing there, vii. 187
- Rosenmüller*, E.F.C., D.D., on the duration of a primitive day, ix. 343—on the chaotic state, ix. 345—on the creation of light, ix. 349—on the eternity of the Son of God, x. 231—on Christ, a Son over his own house, x. 252—on the title “Logos,” applied to Christ, x. 266—on the divinity of the term “Logos,” x. 286—on the phrase “Everlasting Father,” x. 289—on the omnipresence of Christ, x. 293—on the expression, “He made the worlds,” x. 306—on the works of Christ, x. 312—on the superiority of Christ to the angels, x. 326
- Rosetta stone*, the, the history of, viii. 163—its value, viii. 163—account of the deciphering of, viii. 164, *et seq.*
- Rousseau*, Jean Jacques, an impudent infidel, iv. 284—his testimony to the majesty of the life of Christ, vi. 239—admits the morality of the Scriptures, ix. 46; and the moral influence of Christianity, ix. 76—his moral character, ix. 312—his eloquent eulogium on the Gospel and its Author, ix. 313
- Rufen*, presbyter of Aquileia, his catalogue of the books of Scripture, noticed, ix. 186
- Rule of God*, absolute, described, iv. 145
- Ruler of the synagogue*, his office, vi. 189; xii. 174
- Russia*, situation of, at the commencement of the late war, vi. 403, *et seq.*—how she was thrown into the arms of France, vi. 408—its early history alluded to, viii. 192—great scarcity of the Scriptures in, viii. 194—dissenters from the Greek Church, described, viii. 195, *et seq.*—state of the Bible Society in, viii. 200, *et seq.*—the catacombs of Kief, viii. 203—introduction of Christianity into, viii. 207—the great baptism of Russians, an account of, viii. 207
- Ryan*, his “History of the Effects of Religion on Mankind,” alluded to, ix. 324
- S.
- Sabbatai Sevi*, a false Christ, an account of, ix. 227
- Sabbath*, the, a figurative rite of Christianity, ii. 327—a means of salvation, iii. 171—an emblem of the heavenly rest, iii. 441—the interesting character of, iv. 165—reflections on the last of the year, iv. 195—on the institution of, vi. 30—why observed on the first and not on the seventh day of the week, vi. 31—import of the phrase, “blessing the day,” vi. 29—Christ healing on the Sabbath no breach of the law, vi. 188—regular day of worship among the Jews, vi. 189—political utility of, vi. 457—habitual neglect of, in the West India colonies, vi. 459–461—sometimes desecrated by Sunday-schools, vii. 280; xii. 101—reason of, unlicensed criticism respecting, viii. 134—observance of, specially noticed in

the word of God, viii. 134, *et seq.*—absence of express command respecting, in the New Testament, no argument against the observance of the day, viii. 135; xii. 81, 83—universally obligatory, viii. 136; xii. 83, 97—change of, to the first day of the week, viii. 138—great principle of a Sabbath recognised, viii. 139—lax views entertained by English Divines, viii. 141—reason why little mention is made of, in patriarchal ages, viii. 144—the division of time into weeks, viii. 145—Paley's lax observations on, examined, viii. 142, *et seq.*—not neglected by the antediluvians, viii. 147—how it should be celebrated, viii. 150; xii. 98, *et seq.*—importance of clear views of the law of the Sabbath, viii. 151, *et seq.*—the decalogue and ceremonial law on, contrasted, viii. 152, *et seq.*—how far works of charity may be performed, viii. 154, 155, xii. 101; and works of necessity, viii. 156—remarks on Sabbath recreations, viii. 156; xii. 102—controversy respecting the obligation of the Sabbath, alluded to, xii. 81—the will of God that one day in seven shall be devoted to religion, xii. 81, 82—is part of the moral law, xii. 83, *et seq.*—the change from the seventh to the first day of the week, justified, xii. 85, *et seq.*—views of the Sabbath entertained by the churches of the Reformation, alluded to, xii. 89—crude and dangerous notions of Paley on the obligation of the Sabbath, refuted, viii. 142, *et seq.*; xii. 89, *et seq.*—antiquity of, intimated by the division of time into weeks, xii. 93; and by the double quantity of manna which fell on the sixth day, xii. 94—was observed by the inhabitants of the old world, xii. 95—the blessing and sanctification of the

seventh day defended against the assertions of those who consider the Sabbath peculiar to the Jews, xii. 96—the crude notions of Dr. Geddes on the authority of, refuted, xii. 97—extremes into which men run in the observance of the Sabbath, xii. 98, *et seq.*—how far Magistrates should interfere in enforcing public regard to the day, xii. 100—rules regarding the sanctification of, noticed, xii. 100

*Sabbath-schools*, among the first class of religious institutions, ii. 50—number of children educated therein, ii. 51—necessity of such institutions, ii. 52—advantages of a vigilant superintendence over them, ii. 53—evangelical sentiments inculcated in them, ii. 54—the character and zeal of Sunday-school Teachers, ii. 56—the success with which they have been crowned, ii. 57—every thing secular ought to be excluded from the schools, ii. 59—responsible office of a Sunday-school Teacher, ii. 61–64—their establishment seasonable, ii. 247; hopeful and important, ii. 248; a work of humanity, ii. 248; of patriotism, ii. 250; and of virtue, ii. 251—principles on which they should be conducted, iv. 470—in what sense valuable, iv. 512—Mr. Wesley an early promoter of, v. 143—benefit of, to the nation at large, vii. 278—only valuable as associated with religion and the church of Christ, viii. 279, 280—instances of the desecration of, vii. 280—system of, might be more extensively carried out, vii. 283—teaching of writing in, a desecration of, viii. 155

*Sabellianism*, the scheme of, noticed, x. 114, 357—has, in this country, generally merged into Socinianism, x. 356

*Sabianism*, corrupted the old re-

- ligion of Persia, ix. 54—refuted by the book of Job, ix. 87
- Sacrament*, derivation and import of the term, xii. 212—number of, in the Protestant Church, xii. 212—why the term was applied to the positive institutions of Christianity, xii. 213—distinction between sacraments and other religious rites, xii. 213—absurdity of the Church of Rome on this subject, xii. 214—the principle on which sacraments were instituted, xii. 214—views of the nature of, as held by the Church of Rome, xii. 215, *et seq.*; and exposed as flagrantly antiscritptural, xii. 216, *et seq.*—Socinian views of, exhibited, xii. 217—the true nature of, xii. 218, *et seq.*—views of, entertained by Protestant Churches, xii. 218, *et seq.*—the design of, xii. 221. See *Baptism, Eucharist.*
- Sacred harmony*, preface to Mr. Wesley's, viii. 320—327—character of the selection, viii. 320
- *music*, festivals for the performance of, worldly character of, iv. 455
- Sacrifice*, only can propitiate the anger of God, ii. 406—the current testimony of the church of God, concerning, ii. 407—sacrificial rites among the Jews, how performed, ii. 407—sacrifices instruments of sanctification, ii. 408—important lesson taught by the offering of sacrifice, ii. 408—doctrine of, denied by the Judaizing teachers, iii. 55—antiquity of the doctrine of, iii. 58; xi. 115—the doctrine of, one of pure revelation, iii. 59—moral effects of the doctrine, iii. 64—through which the presence of God only approached, iii. 71—the only way to the mercy-seat, iii. 72—quality of those offered to God, iii. 90—special character of Christ's sacrifice, iii. 114—relative value of that offered, iii. 114—not a rite of confession merely, iii. 114—adequacy of Christ's sacrifice to atone, iii. 115; viii. 432—in what its excellency specially consists, iii. 116—distinguishing efficacy of, iii. 118—the only source of the Christian's joy, iii. 120—mere sacrifice not sufficient to propitiate, iii. 143—acceptance of, a mark of a heart that is right, iii. 151—of Christ, proof of the long-suffering of God, iii. 365—why termed "a fountain opened," iii. 375—nature of the principle of, among modern Heathens, iv. 158—character of those of the patriarchal age, iv. 279—difference between the Jewish and Christian, iv. 281—the divine appointment of, vi. 40—the distinction between clean and unclean animals, a proof of the early institution of sacrifices, vi. 55—character of the sacrifice of Christ, viii. 541, *et seq.*—the universality of, a proof of the common origin of religion, ix. 35—general extent of the doctrine, ix. 50—offered in China, ix. 51—the dignity of the sacrifice of Christ, xi. 68; and its superior efficacy, xi. 88—on the propitiatory character of the ancient heathen sacrifices, xi. 89—on the sacrificial terms of the Old Testament employed in the New, xi. 89—91—expiatory and vicarious nature of those under the law, xi. 90—objections to this view of them, answered, xi. 91—sins for which sacrifice was offered, xi. 92—sacrifices of the law, considered, xi. 87, 116—were not merely mulcts and fines, xi. 94—why offered for bodily distempers, xi. 95—vicarious character of those offered for the whole congregation, xi. 96—expiatory sacrifices familiar to the Jews, xi. 99—sentiments of uninspired Jewish writers on ex-

- piatory sacrifice, xi. 100—of the law, were types, xi. 101—scripture proof of, xi. 101, *et seq.*—terms of, descriptive of the nature and effect of the death of Christ, xi. 106—in what sense Christ was made sin for us, xi. 107—the objection that the Jewish sacrifices expiated no moral transgression, refuted, xi. 115—ante-Mosaic sacrifices, considered, xi. 117, *et seq.*—practice of, a proof of the common origin of religion, xii. 310
- Sadducees*, their origin and opinions, vi. 128—considered as the Socinians among the Jews, vi. 129—character of the, x. 223—an error of, xii. 16
- Saints*, meaning of the term, ii. 378—how they only can enjoy the felicity of heaven, iii. 161—duty of Christians to imitate those of old, iii. 227—eminent piety of the ancient, iii. 443—prayers of, raise God out of his habitation, iii. 476
- Salisbury craigs*, an example of a natural chronometer, noticed, ix. 341
- Salt*, why Christians are styled “the salt of the earth,” ii. 379
- Salutations*, nature of those mentioned in the Scriptures, vi. 266
- Salvation*, the great end of the Gospel, ii. 282—scheme of, laid in the prospect of the fall, ii. 293—infinite value of, ii. 299—mysterious way in which it sometimes is effected, ii. 364—method of, defined, ii. 407—of an individual, accounted for, on the direct agency of God, ii. 448—the instrument of salvation, ii. 448—of the Heathen, ii. 485—in what respects it is considered a work, iii. 21—truly of God, displayed in the conversion of Saul, iii. 44—antiquity of the doctrine of, by sacrifice, iii. 58—of infants, argued from the divine perfections, iii. 76, 77; proved from the constitution of the divine administration, iii. 77—of men, the great end of the Christian ministry, iii. 95—in what respect Christ has salvation, iii. 168—cause for joy on account of, in Christ, iii. 169—instruments employed in communicating, iii. 170, 171—the attainment of, possible, iii. 225—Paul’s regard for his own salvation, iii. 229—of men, illustrates the stability of the councils of God, iii. 304—guilt of neglecting, iii. 316—“labour for,” import of the term, iii. 318—knowledge of the truth essential to, iii. 413—extensive meaning of the term, iii. 415—how the will of God is connected with, iii. 417—two senses in which the term is taken, iii. 446—not finished on the cross, iii. 446—how to be worked out, iii. 447—doctrine of, by faith, rejected by the Jews, iv. 3—the seeking of, one mode of redeeming time, iv. 200—possibility of knowing we are *now* in a state of, iv. 296—by works as a condition, not meritorious, v. 232—a great co-operation at work, in effecting, viii. 458—is ascribed to the death of Christ, xi. 23—import of the term, xi. 167—attainable by all, proved to be a doctrine of Scripture, xi. 274, *et seq.*
- Samaritan Pentateuch*, description of, vi. 80; ix. 151; xii. 334—books contained in the, ix. 184—difference between it and the Jewish copy, xii. 345
- Samaritans*, hostility between them and the Jews, iv. 342—Christ preaches the Gospel to them, iv. 482—origin of their nation, and cause of the hostility between them and the Jews, vi. 116—impede the rebuilding of the Jewish temple, vi. 118—subdued by John Hyrcanus, vi. 128—in what respects the hostility between

- them and the Jews was over-ruled for good, xii. 345
- Samuel*, his re-appearance to Saul, vi. 111
- San Juan*, establishment of a school in, viii. 219
- Sanctification*, the great end of the knowledge of Christ, iii. 52—nature of this attainment, iii. 53—a special work of the Holy Spirit, iv. 85—the extent and possibility of, taught by Christ, iv. 191—evangelical views of, v. 14—views of, entertained by the early Methodists, v. 80—as defined in the Minutes of Conference, v. 167—the scriptural character of the doctrine, illustrated, v. 168—171—strongly inculcated by the Apostles, vi. 263—absurdity of the notion that sanctification precedes justification, vii. 220—is confounded with justification by the Church of Rome, xi. 226—entire sanctification, defined, xii. 3—is distinguished from justification, xii. 4—when attainable, considered, xii. 4—objections to the idea, that it is only to be obtained at death, xii. 5, *et seq.*: this sentiment held by Calvinistic Divines, xii. 6—perfect love, defined, xii. 7—the doctrine which asserts the necessity of indwelling sin, anti-scriptural, xii. 9—how attainable, xii. 10—how far connected with regeneration, xii. 10—objections to the doctrine of entire sanctification, considered, xii. 11
- Sanctifier*, a special office of the Spirit, iii. 383
- Sanctuary*, the characteristic administration of, described, iv. 172
- Sandwich Islands*, voyage of “the Blonde” to the, viii. 96—discovery of the, viii. 97—advance of, toward civilization, viii. 97—curious cession of, to the British crown, viii. 98—renunciation of idolatry in the, viii. 99; and adoption of the Christian religion, viii. 102—providential coincidence in the establishment of an American Mission, viii. 103—progress of the Mission, viii. 104—character of the ancient superstition of, viii. 105—remarks on the origin of the inhabitants of, viii. 107—description of the volcanic eruptions of, viii. 108, *et seq.*—specimen of the eloquence of the islanders, viii. 114—traditions in the, concerning the deluge, ix. 50
- Sandwith*, Humphry, M.D., his “Apology for the System of Methodism,” reviewed, vii. 129, *et seq.*—character of the work, vii. 160
- Satan*, signification of the term, x. 426. See *Devil*.
- Satisfaction*, made by the death of Christ to divine justice, xi. 70, *et seq.*—general views of the doctrine of, as entertained by Divines, examined, xi. 71—meaning of the term, xi. 72—evangelical views of the doctrine of, xi. 72—on the terms “equivalent,” and “compensation,” how far proper, xi. 74—Antinomian views of this doctrine, examined and refuted, xi. 75, *et seq.* See *Atonement*.
- Saul*, son of Kish, why he consulted the witch at Endor, ii. 479—the evil spirit with which he was troubled, vi. 109—an awful picture of a man forsaken of God, vi. 110
- Saurin*, Rev. James, his observations on the Apostles’ Creed, noticed, vii. 497
- Saussure*, M., his view of the comparative insignificance of man, examined, ix. 335—on the veracity of the Mosaic chronology, ix. 340—on the rival sects of geology, ix. 346
- Saved*, the, why represented by our Lord as few, iii. 266
- Sceptre*, of the ancients, referred to, ii. 308—the depar-



- ture of, from Judah, considered, ix. 253
- Schoetgen*, on the phrase, "Spirit of Holiness," applied to the divine nature of Christ, x. 248
- Schools*, encouragement to, in South America, viii. 217, *et seq.*
- of the *Prophets*, described, vi. 105
- Science*, discoveries of, advance the cause of the Son of God, ii. 299—not capable of effecting real happiness, ii. 234—has invariably followed the introduction of Christianity in heathen lands, ii. 365—how science has aided the progress of the Gospel, ii. 366—unable to remedy the evils of idolatry, ii. 489—destitute of all moral influence, merely as such, ii. 490—flourishes only in Christian nations, iv. 459—no real connexion between scientific knowledge and moral influence, iv. 460—hostility of scientific men to religion, vii. 258, *et seq.*
- Scientia media*, an obsolete theory, respecting the foreknowledge of God, described, x. 9—its absurdity and uselessness, x. 10
- Scotland*, modern fanaticism manifested there, v. 150—character of the Scotch congregational singing, v. 207—Preachers ordained for, by imposition of hands, v. 268—state of education in, vii. 276
- , Church of, on the doctrines of election and predestination, xi. 439—on sacraments, xii. 219—on the agreement and difference between baptism and the eucharist, xii. 286
- Scott*, Rev. Dr., on the exercise of prayer and thanksgiving, xii. 80
- , Rev. Thomas, disclaims the notion, that God is the author of sin, x. 83—quoted on the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, xi. 256, 261; his opinion refuted, xi. 261; on those scriptures which speak of Christ dying for those who perish, examined, xi. 285—his charging the Apostles with careless writing, the result of commenting on Scripture with a pre-conceived system, xi. 285—his absurd mode of evading the force of such scriptures, xi. 287—on the apostates mentioned in the Hebrews, xi. 290—his remarks on the calling of the Thessalonians, noticed, xi. 360—his absurd notion of the cause of unbelief, xi. 383—his views of the doctrine of personal election, refuted, xi. 385—his translation of the Articles of the Synod of Dort, quoted, xi. 432, *et seq.*
- Scougal*, Rev. Mr., Introductory Essay to his "Life of God in the Soul of Man," vi. 341—361
- Scribes*, who they were, vi. 190
- Scriptures*, evils arising from incorrect quotations of, i. 32—oral amendments of, condemned, i. 156—effects of their circulation on the Greek and Latin Church, i. 215, 216—results of their universal dissemination, anticipated, i. 216—the oracles of God make all other oracles vocal, i. 464—ministry of the word, the grand means of the conversion of the world, ii. 10—national distribution of, not forgotten by the Almighty, in the dispensations of providence, ii. 31—representations they give of man noticed, ii. 66; ix. 283; xii. 351—only understood through the Holy Spirit, ii. 210—natural aversion of man to, ii. 211—their practical character, mentioned, ii. 235—exercised the zeal of primitive Christians, ii. 358—why compared to seed, iii. 368

—practical effects of, iii. 368—publication of, secured in Christian worship, iii. 213—the leading characters of, iv. 46, *et seq.*—an important gift of the Holy Spirit, iv. 83—a series of connected revelation, iv. 276—contain the doctrines of God, iv. 400; ix. 282; xii. 352—necessary to the exertion of all moral influence, iv. 460—favourable to diffusion of useful knowledge, iv. 461—present a standard of duty, binding on the conscience, iv. 464—the inspiration of, considered, vi. 11—difference of style, accounted for, vi. 13—quality of the inspiration of, noticed, vi. 14—advantages of an inspired Scripture, vi. 15—when committed to writing, vi. 16—means adopted to preserve them uncorrupted, vi. 79—testimony of the ancients respecting them, vi. 80, 81—paramount excellency of, vi. 329–331—excluded by Abbé Dubois in his attempts to Christianize India, vii. 322—importance of, being distributed in Egypt, vii. 347—character of the books of, vii. 350, *et seq.*—the moral impossibility of forgery, vii. 351—genuineness of, proved by monuments of antiquity, viii. 177; xii. 335, *et seq.*—circulation of, in South America, viii. 223, *et seq.*—value of, even independent of their inspiration, ix. 44—heathen philosophers pilfer from them, ix. 46—antiquity of, ix. 145, *et seq.*; xii. 333—importance of the evidence of the truth of, ix. 145—morality of the, ix. 146—impossibility of forgery in the books of Moses, considered, ix. 152, *et seq.*—on the credibility of the Gospel history, ix. 164, *et seq.*; xii. 341—on the uncorrupted preservation of, ix. 184, *et seq.*; xii. 345—various catalogues of the books of, ix. 185; xii.

334, 344—integrity and uncorruptedness of, proved, ix. 190, *et seq.*; xii. 347—on the credibility of the testimony of the writers of, ix. 195, *et seq.*; xii. 348—the harmony of, ix. 308, *et seq.*—moral tendency of, exhibited, ix. 310, *et seq.*; xii. 357—the style of, ix. 317, *et seq.*—incidental coincidences to the truth of, ix. 318—cruel enactments, found in, examined, ix. 328, *et seq.*; xii. 365—defended from the charge of indelicacy, ix. 330—imprecations of, noticed, ix. 331—supposed contradictions of, alluded to, ix. 331—far superior to the finest writings of antiquity, ix. 500—credit of, affected on the Socinian scheme, x. 129—on the importance of appeals to, in controversy, xi. 274—declare that salvation is attainable by all men, xi. 274, *et seq.*—the only standard of Christian doctrine, xii. 199—language of the Old Testament, a proof of its antiquity, xii. 334—internal evidence of the truth of, ix. 282, *et seq.*; xii. 351, *et seq.*—collateral evidence to the truth of the, noticed, ix. 319, *et seq.*; xii. 358, *et seq.*—defended from the charge of cruelty, xii. 364—the incomprehensibility of certain parts, noticed, xii. 366  
 “*Sea to sea*,” the phrase explained, iii. 177  
*Seal*, in what respects Christ was sealed by the Father, iii. 307—import of the phrase, “to seal,” iii. 307—the practical results of the sealing of Christ, iii. 313  
*Seals*, put upon the claims of our Lord, iii. 308—of divinity upon his doctrines, iii. 308—of miracles, iii. 308—of fulfilled prophecy, iii. 309—set upon Christ at his crucifixion, iii. 310—an essential part of a sacrament, xii. 220

- Secker*, Archbishop, supposed correspondent of Rev. John Wesley, vii. 440
- Secret prayer*, considered as a duty, iii. 436—how it ought to be performed, iii. 437, 438—important benefit resulting from, iii. 438; xii. 64
- *things*, which belong to God, iii. 321, *et seq.*—why said to belong to God, iii. 327
- Seed of Abraham*, why this term was given to the Messiah, iii. 489–491—how far the earth has been blessed by, iii. 499–503
- *of the woman*, the tree of life to man, iii. 70—why Christ was so termed, iii. 394—explanation of the phrase, vi. 39—in what respects, it shall bruise the head of the serpent, ix. 250
- *of the word*, part of it perishing, no argument against sowing more, ii. 367—its quality, ii. 368—its quantity, ii. 369
- “Seeking God,”* meaning of the phrase, vi. 345
- Seer*, why this term was given to the Prophets, iii. 122
- Segur*, Count, Philip de, his “History of the Expedition to Russia,” quoted, viii. 199
- Selah*, meaning of the term, vi. 164
- Seleucus*, a great patron of the Jews, vi. 122
- Self-denial*, an indispensable qualification of a Christian Missionary, i. 257; iii. 5—an essential ingredient in Christian devotedness, iii. 5
- Self-knowledge*, why the attainment of, is rare, ii. 262
- Self-love*, a danger to which every Christian Missionary is exposed, i. 260
- Selfishness*, principle of, to be deprecated, ii. 353—operated fatally among the Heathen, ii. 444—how the Gospel triumphed over, ii. 444—its renunciation an important part of self-denial, iii. 5—evils of this principle, specified, iii. 5—uselessness of a selfish feeling, iii. 13—how displayed in many, vii. 231
- Semi-Arians*, tenets of, alluded to, x. 356
- *Pelagians*, the opinions of the, on the effects of the fall of man, x. 434
- Seneca*, his notion of a general conflagration, ix. 53—a believer in the eternity of matter, ix. 64—his ideas of futurity, ix. 71—denied the soul’s immortality, ix. 73—condemned gladiatorial combats, ix. 76—on the omniscience of the Deity, x. 6—on the tendency of man to evil, x. 462, 464
- “Sent from God,”* the Socinian interpretation of this phrase, examined, x. 155
- Separate state of the soul*, considered, xii. 14
- Septuagint*, history of the, vi. 124; ix. 151; xii. 334—books contained in the, noticed, ix. 184—remarks on the version of the prophecy of Daniel, ix. 268—on the word, “firmament,” ix. 347
- Sermon on the mount*, considered, vi. 183, *et seq.*
- Sermons*, character of those preached at court, vii. 507—how far Ministers are justified in preaching what are termed “political sermons,” vii. 512—general fault of those of the modern school, viii. 238
- Serpent*, the phrase, “bruise the head of,” explained, vi. 39—symbolical and mythological representations of, vii. 345—serpent worship, described, vii. 345, *et seq.*—traditions concerning the, noticed, ix. 49—the instrument of man’s temptation, x. 406—conjectures respecting the, x. 409—on the justice of the sentence pronounced upon the, x. 411—observations on the curse upon the serpent, x. 427—enmity of,

- to "the woman," illustrated, ix. 250
- Servant of God*, the providential work of a, considered, iii. 19—his duty connected with the church, iii. 20—the work of his personal salvation examined, iii. 21—responsible character of the, iii. 22—none serve God for nought, iii. 188
- Servants*, salutary effect of religion on, xii. 145—duties of, considered, xii. 146—are reciprocal with those of their masters, xii. 146—the religious rights of servants, alluded to, xii. 148
- Servetus*, Michael, treatment of, by John Calvin, v. 225
- Service*, the acceptable service of God, what, iii. 406
- Seventy weeks*, Daniel's prediction concerning, explained, vi. 167
- Shaddai*, explanation of the term, by the Talmudists, x. 59
- Shadow of death*, scriptural import of the phrase, iv. 210
- Shadows of heavenly things*, what, iv. 169—in what respect the Levitical dispensation was a shadow, xi. 103
- Shaftesbury*, Earl of, on the ground of moral obligation, ix. 93—his moral character, ix. 312—on the doctrine of rewards and punishments, ix. 326
- Shame*, the treacherous character of, ii. 380
- Sharp*, Granville, Esq., his canon of criticism, on the absence of the Greek article, x. 209
- Shechinah*, wanting in the second temple, vi. 120—a type of Christ, vi. 121—its presence in the tabernacle, x. 163
- Sheep of Christ*, who they are, viii. 531
- Sheffield*, severe persecution of Mr. Charles Wesley at, v. 107–109
- Sheol*, meaning of the term, viii. 288, *et seq.*—Magee's criticism upon, viii. 289, 293—representations of, from whence derived, viii. 293
- Shepherds*, why hateful to the Egyptians, viii. 177, 180—why Kings are compared to, viii. 531
- Sherlock*, Thomas, D.D., Bishop of London, on the fall of man, x. 429, *et seq.*
- , William, D.D., his "Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection," referred to, ix. 214—on the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity, x. 124—and exemplified in the influence of the Spirit of God, x. 129
- Shield of faith*, described, iv. 435
- Shiloh*, continuance of the ark there, vi. 103—import of the term as applied to the Messiah, vi. 71, 196; ix. 253; xii. 324
- Shirley*, Rev. Walter, demands a recantation of certain Minutes of Conference, v. 235—attends the Conference for that object, v. 236—the Conference declaration, v. 236—Mr. Shirley's note appended thereto, v. 238—history of this interview as recorded by Mr. Shirley, v. 237–239—his conduct throughout the affair approved, v. 239
- Shore*, Sir John, on the character of the Hindoos, ix. 80; xii. 316
- Shuckford*, Samuel, D.D., on an ancient universal religion, ix. 36
- Sibylline verses*, an account of the, ix. 51
- Sidmouth*, Viscount, introduces a bill in the House of Lords to amend the toleration laws, i. 100—vexatious and persecuting character of that measure, i. 101—Mr. Watson's address to the public on that subject, i. 102–106; showing that it inflicts a blow on the religious liberty of the subject, i. 103; repeals the most important provisions of the Toleration Act, destroys the existence of a large and useful class of subordinate teachers, and violates

- the rights of property, i. 104  
—failure of his Lordship's measure, i. 106
- Signs*, a term to denote miracles, ii. 221—an essential part of a sacrament, xii. 219  
——— *and wonders*, of the "man of sin," considered, ix. 222, *et seq.*
- Silence*, a term expressive of intense interest, iii. 480—the effect of reproof, iii. 481—produced by satisfaction, iii. 482
- Siloam*, the well of, frequented on the feast of tabernacles, vi. 200
- Silver shrines*, of Demetrius, described, vi. 248
- Simeon*, his pious exultation at the advent of the Messiah, vi. 220
- Simon Magus*, Gnosticism attributed to, viii. 27
- Simpson*, David, M.A., his "Key to the Prophecies," quoted, ix. 266
- Sin*, and misery, closely connected, ii. 323—the tyrannical power of, ii. 375—cause of the vileness of the human body, ii. 386—an act of forgetfulness of God, ii. 400—sins of the heart equally punished with others, ii. 401—an evil followed by most disastrous circumstances, ii. 403—contempt of sin, a mark of eminent folly, ii. 403—sad results of carelessness on account of sin, ii. 404, 405—only expiated by intervention of sacrifice, ii. 406; iii. 120—perpetual connexion of pain and misery with, iii. 304—present penal results of, proof of the long-suffering of God, iii. 364—evil of taking partial views of, iii. 366—how arraigned on the day of judgment, iii. 367–369—phrase "make an end of sin," explained, iii. 387—the sting of death, what, iii. 428—how the law constitutes its strength, iii. 431—the love of, veils the heart, iv. 140—the glaring evil of, iv. 190—the tyranny of, iv. 409—in man's nature there is a liability to, vi. 33—man, though finite, not always liable to sin, vi. 34—danger of man on account of, viii. 434—how to be estimated, ix. 289—punishment assigned to, considered, ix. 290—not analogous to a civil debt, xi. 60, 76—presumptuous sins, described, xi. 92
- Sinai*, giving of the law upon, iv. 420—a significant type of the law, iv. 420
- Sincerity*, law of, in the exercise of charity, noticed, ii. 348—great importance of, stated, iii. 148  
——— *of God*, impugned by the doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation, xi. 353
- Singing*, Mr. Watson's views of congregational singing, i. 172—an universal expression of joy, iii. 109—nature of that in heaven, iii. 110—of the church on earth, iii. 110—peculiarity of the singing of the redeemed in heaven, iii. 111—Dr. Gillies's letter to Mr. Wesley respecting congregational singing, v. 207—character of that followed in Scotland, v. 207—defect in the, among the Methodists, viii. 321—character of, among the Jews, viii. 322; among the Greeks and Romans, viii. 322; in the primitive church, viii. 322; and at the Reformation, viii. 323—Mr. Wesley's opinion of congregational singing, viii. 323, 324—how it ought to be governed, viii. 324—psalm tunes, what kind proper, viii. 324—opinion of Bishop Taylor on, viii. 324—an important part of divine worship, viii. 325
- Singleness of eye*, meaning of the phrase, viii. 514—great advantages of, viii. 515, *et seq.*
- Sinner*, character of the, iv. 533
- Σκία*, how far applicable to the ceremonial law, xi. 103

*Slave trade*, evils of the, described, i. 160—dreadful sorrows it inflicted, ii. 30

*Slavery*, abolition of, attributed to the operation of Missions, i. 208, 210—Mr. Watson's patriotic opinion of slavery, i. 398—utterly inconsistent with the principles of Christianity, i. 400—declaration of the Methodist Conference of 1825 and 1830 against the principle of, i. 412, 511—evils of colonial slavery, i. 516—West India slavery totally different from the slavery of the Old Testament, i. 519; and of the New, i. 521—its great moral guilt, i. 527—futility of the idea that its abolition will be effected by the slave-proprietors, i. 528—Missionaries encouraged by planters, to make the slave contented with his chain, i. 529—bright prospects of the abolitionists, i. 530, 557—appeal to the electors at a general election, on the subject of slavery, i. 533—resolution of the Conference of 1831 on the subject of slavery, i. 541—silence imposed on Missionaries while in the colonies on this topic, i. 556—duty of Englishmen to seek its abolition, i. 558—strong resolutions of the Conference of 1832 on colonial slavery, i. 566—letter to Mr. Buxton on negro emancipation, i. 590—597—nature of the termination of, depends on the infusion of Christian principles, ii. 104—108—an ancient custom of, noticed, iii. 281—how far permitted under the Jewish dispensation, vi. 94; xii. 111—fearful evils of, vi. 423—deteriorating effect of, on the West Indian character, vi. 515—Mr. Wesley's views upon, vii. 435, 436—effects of Christianity on, ix. 323—the abolition of British colonial slavery, ix. 323—as it existed among the Jews, xii. 111—

duty of every Christian government in regard to slavery, xii. 112—unworthy the name of Christian, xii. 112—immoral character of West India slavery, xii. 149

*Slaves*, Sir G. Rose's letter "on the Means and Importance of converting the Slaves of the West Indies to Christianity," noticed, i. 383—Mr. Watson's sermon on "the Religious Instruction of the Slaves," characterized, i. 389; ii. 88—effects of Christianity on the slaves of the ancient world, ii. 103—those produced on the West Indian slaves, ii. 108—117—Christian instruction of, recognised by the British Legislature, ii. 117—sources of encouragement in this work, ii. 117—125—number of, among the Romans, ii. 444—unprotected by the Heathen, ii. 444—how regarded by Christianity, ii. 445—were forgotten, when the slave trade was abolished, vi. 424—moral condition of, not displayed, vi. 424—number of, in British colonies, vi. 425—duty of Christians in regard to them, vi. 426, *et seq.*—marriage almost entirely neglected, vi. 439—great number of, among the ancients, ix. 77—treated with cruelty by the Heathen, ix. 77; xii. 314—privileges of, among the Jews, xii. 112

*Sleep*, meaning of the term often used in the New Testament, ii. 390

*Sleep-talking*, a remarkable instance of, v. 504—the cavils of Mr. Southey concerning, v. 504

*Sloth*, darkens the heart, iv. 141  
*Smith*, Rev. James, his "Carnal Man's Character," noticed, vii. 486

—, John, supposed Archbishop Secker a correspondent of Mr. Wesley, vii. 440

—, John, the Missionary,

- Mr. Shrewsbury's character of, i. 406
- Smith, John Pye, D.D.*, on the Jewish form of benediction, x. 141—his "Scripture testimony to the Messiah," referred to, x. 210—on the phrase "express image of his person," x. 250—on the import of the word "Memra," x. 273—on the "Logos" of Philo, x. 278—on the apostolic benediction, x. 328—on the application of the divine nature of Christ to circumstances which pertain to his human nature, x. 349
- Snodgrass, Major*, his "Narrative of the Burmese War," reviewed, viii. 85-95
- Sobriety*, Christian, indispensable in a Christian Minister, ii. 177—is jealous for the purity of the truth, ii. 179—prepares for the perpetuation of the truth to future days, ii. 180—is manifested in the pre-eminence which a Minister gives to the doctrines of the cross, ii. 181—in discrimination of truth, ii. 185-188—in the application of Christian doctrine, ii. 190, *et seq.*
- Socinianism*, fatal danger of this heresy, ii. 236; x. 120—the Gospel of Socinianism contrasted with the Gospel of Christ, ii. 273; x. 125—unsoundness of, iv. 29—scheme of, inconsistent with the righteousness of God, iv. 175—practical character of a Socinian, iv. 480—estimate of the preaching of Christ and his Apostles, vi. 186—in what the modern Socinians differ from the ancient, vii. 500—calumny of, against Justin Martyr, viii. 61—absurdity of their claim to Ebion, viii. 65—doctrine of, not supported by Cerinthus or Ebion, viii. 66, *et seq.*—inconsistency of, in denying the distinction between matter and spirit, ix. 471—proved to be a system of idolatry, x. 117, *et seq.*—the doctrine of, derogatory to the love of Christ, x. 123, 127—presumptuous character of, x. 125—alters the foundation of Christianity, x. 125—regards sin as a venial offence, x. 126—changes the character of Christian experience, x. 126—entertains strange notions of the death of Christ, x. 127—interferes with the spiritual affections of the heart, x. 128—impugns the credit of the Scriptures, x. 129—is staggered by the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ, x. 149, *et seq.*—instances of perversion of Scripture by, x. 150, *et seq.*, 183, 206, 292, 304, 364—ridiculous notions of, respecting "the angel of the Lord," x. 169, 170—on the name "Jehovah," being given to Christ, x. 193—on the phrase, "Emmanuel, God with us," x. 202—on the creation of the world being ascribed to the Word, x. 206—on the title "Great God and our Saviour," x. 208—on the expression, "God is thy throne," x. 210—on the title "the true God," x. 213—"God blessed for ever," x. 215—attempts of, to evade the eternity of the Son of God, x. 232—on the phraseology of the Targums respecting the "Logos," x. 270—their absurdity in considering the Logos of St. John an attribute, x. 285—on the work of creation being attributed to Christ, x. 303, *et seq.*—attempts of, to evade the force of Stephen's prayer, x. 318—on the phrase "to call on the name of Jesus Christ," x. 321—on the angelical worship of Christ, x. 322—on the apostolic benedictions, x. 328—anciently worshipped Christ, x. 329—antiquity not in favour of the Socinian heresy, x. 355—views entertained of the Holy Spirit, x. 362—fal-

lacy of their interpretations of Scripture respecting the Deity of the Holy Ghost, x. 364—the objection of, to the ancient form of baptism, examined, x. 369—absurdity of, in regarding the Holy Spirit as merely an attribute, x. 372—the objection of, to the doctrine of man's original purity and holiness, refuted, x. 396—on the death with which our progenitors were threatened, x. 440—views of, respecting the death of Christ, xi. 24; their absurdity, xi. 25, *et seq.*—objections of, to the evangelical doctrine of substitution, considered, xi. 29, *et seq.*—on the impulsive cause of the death of Christ, xi. 32, *et seq.*—on the terms “chastisement” and “stripes” being applied to the sufferings of Christ, xi. 35—on the phrase “he was made sin,” xi. 36—view of the penal character of the death of Christ, xi. 37—low notions of the benefits of Christ's death, xi. 38—concessions of, on the interpretation of the word *λασμος*, xi. 39—denial of the existence of wrath in God, considered, xi. 40, *et seq.*—their view of the term “reconciliation,” xi. 46—objection of, to the doctrine of reconciliation, answered, xi. 50; and to the scriptural view of redemption, xi. 53, *et seq.*—that redemption involves the absurdity of paying a price to Satan, considered, xi. 55—that it is inconsistent with the freeness of divine grace, examined, xi. 57—inconsistency of, with the Gospel method of pardon, xi. 64–66—views of, on the dignity of the sacrifice of Christ, refuted, xi. 67—the objection of, to the doctrine of the atonement, on the injustice of punishing the innocent instead of the guilty, answered, xi. 81, *et seq.*—absurd views of, re-

specting the terms used in denoting the Levitical sacrifices applied to the sacrifice of Christ, xi. 89—the notion that the sacrificial terms of the Old Testament were figurative expressions, refuted, xi. 100—idea of, concerning the doctrine of an intermediate state, xii. 14—Socinian view of sacraments, noticed, xii. 217

*Socrates*, his doubts respecting a future state, noticed, ii. 429; ix. 15—his immorality, alluded to, iv. 467; x. 8—on the origin of law, ix. 34—Rousseau's contrast between the death of Socrates and Christ, ix. 313—evil tendency of such comparisons, x. 8—on the omniscience of the Deity, x. 7

*Sodom*, destruction of, alluded to by the ancients, vi. 67

*Solar system*, an illustration of contrivance and design in the works of God, ix. 409

*Soldier*, why the Christian is compared to a, iv. 432

*Solomon*, the pacific character of his reign, vi. 114—its commercial prosperity, vi. 115—author of the book of Proverbs, vi. 164; and of the Ecclesiastes, vi. 115, 165—when the latter book was probably written, vi. 115, 165—the author of the Song of Songs, vi. 165—how far the seventy-second Psalm refers to him, viii. 398—extensive moral results of his reign, ix. 41—on the inapplicability of the forty-fifth Psalm to him, x. 211

*Solomon's temple*, not merely a place of national worship, ii. 334—an illustrious type of Christ, ii. 335; and of the church, ii. 335—it was the house of God, ii. 336; of authorized and accepted sacrifice, ii. 337; of united worship and blessing, ii. 337; of communion between God and man, ii. 338—why magnificently built, ii. 470—what constitutes a true temple, ii. 471



Σωμᾱτικῶς, explained, x. 350

*Son of God*, the acting God of the Old Testament, i. 130—applied to our Lord as the appropriate designation of a divine person, i. 232; x. 220—Christ so called not merely in respect of his human nature, i. 415; vii. 7, 12; x. 254—a divine appellation of the Redeemer, ii. 236; vii. 40; x. 218—correct views of the Son of God entertained by the Jews, ii. 236; vii. 40; x. 218, 221—how the Son of God became Christ, ii. 236; vii. 40; x. 218, 221—how he became a peculiar victim, ii. 322—why he was denominated “the Word,” ii. 432—the incarnation of, considered, ii. 434—his superiority over Moses, vi. 309—passages where the term is applied solely to the divine nature of Christ, vii. 7, *et seq.*; x. 220, *et seq.*—a term used by Nathanael, implying eternity of filiation, vii. 17; also by Peter in his confession of Christ, vii. 18, 19, x. 222; and by the man healed at the pool of Siloam, vii. 21—this term and that of Messiah, understood to be of different import by the Jews, vii. 22; x. 223—the objections of the Jews to the assumption of this term by Christ, considered, vii. 23—Christ condemned to death because of this title, which he assumed, vii. 26; x. 145, 245—for this the Jews sought to stone him, vii. 30; x. 222, 242—not given to Christ because of the miraculous conception, vii. 36; x. 221, 254—a term not used at all exclusively to the human nature, vii. 44—propriety of the terms “eternal generation,” and “begotten,” as applied to, examined, vii. 79, *et seq.*—outline of the scripture testimony to the Son, x. 144—scripture proof of this title, x. 220—attempts to restrict the import

of this title, x. 221; fearful consequences of such a step, x. 221—how applied to Christ by his disciples, x. 221—a personal, and not an official, designation, x. 223—origin of this title, x. 225—not given to Christ because of the resurrection, x. 225—remarks on the phrase, “This day have I begotten thee,” x. 227, *et seq.*—notions of, as entertained by the Jews, x. 230, 231, *et seq.*—conveyed to them a very definite idea, x. 235—how the term came to be applied to the Messiah, x. 235, *et seq.*—the phrase “only begotten,” considered, ii. 436; vii. 9; x. 239—creation being ascribed to the, proves the divinity of the Sonship, x. 241—objection of those who deny the eternal Sonship, refuted, x. 242—claims God as his proper Father, x. 243—acknowledged by Christ before the Sanhedrim, x. 245—title used in opposition to the human nature, x. 246—on the term “Spirit of Holiness,” applied to the Son of God, x. 247, *et seq.*—in what sense he is superior to angels, x. 248—the brightness of the Father’s glory, x. 250—is sent in the likeness of flesh, x. 251—is a Son over his own house, x. 251—proved a Son in his divine nature, in passages where the first Person is termed “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” x. 252—danger of rejecting the eternal Sonship of Christ, although his divinity may be held, x. 254, *et seq.*—opinions of the Fathers and schoolmen respecting, noticed, x. 265—why this title is preferred to that of “Logos,” to be applied to our Saviour, x. 279, *et seq.*  
*“Son of perdition,”* proved to be the Pope, vi. 301, 302  
*Song*, in heaven, why termed “new,” iii. 110—its peculiarity,

- iii. 111—importance of learning the new song now, iii. 112
- Song of Songs*, an inspired book, vi. 165—the author of the, vi. 165—the occasion of its being written, vi. 165—the mystical signification of, vi. 165
- “*Sons of God*,” meaning of the phrase, vi. 53
- *the Prophets*, who they were vi. 104
- Sonship*, eternal, of Christ, sentiments of Dr. Adam Clarke respecting this doctrine noticed, i. 228; vii. 5—at variance with the tenets of Methodism, i. 229; vii. 3—reasons why the orthodox view of the doctrine was opposed by Dr. Clarke, i. 229; vii. 5—the term “Son of God” never applied to Christ in regard to his human nature, i. 232—serious tendency of the views of Dr. Clarke on this subject, i. 234–236—opinion of the Rev. R. Hall on this doctrine, i. 239, 240—the Methodist Conference admit no man into connexion with them denying this doctrine, i. 242—the doctrine recognised by St. Paul, ii. 272—remarks on the eternal Sonship of Christ, vii. 3–86—the application of the term “Father” to the first Person in the Trinity, an argument in favour of, vii. 11—the doctrine by no means contradicted by the Scriptures, vii. 13—implied in Nathanael’s acknowledgment of Christ, vii. 16, 17; in Peter’s confession, vii. 18–20; and in the conduct of the man at the pool of Siloam, vii. 21—a doctrine essential to the proper holding of the Deity of Christ, vii. 83, *et seq.*—danger in rejecting this doctrine, although the divinity of Christ may be held, x. 254, *et seq.*—manifests the love of God in the scheme of redemption, x. 260—objections to the doctrine, considered, x. 261, *et seq.* See *Son of God*.
- Sophistry*, one of the trials of true faith, iv. 374–376
- Soul*, the great value of the, an excitement to liberality, ii. 417—immortality of the, iii. 27—its existence after death, stated and defended, iii. 27, 28—its future being, a doctrine of revelation, iii. 28—rest of the, after death, considered, iii. 28–31—value of, iii. 217–220—its unlimited intellectual capacities, iii. 217—its moral capacities, iii. 218—its capability of high enjoyment, iii. 218—the care of God for it, iii. 219—anxiety of angels and devils for the, iii. 220—case of one lost, contemplated, iii. 221—danger to which it is exposed, iii. 224—the loss of, contrasted with the gain of the world, iii. 225—the true food of, described, iii. 313—banishment of, from God, part of the sting of death, iii. 430—interests of the, should regulate our conduct, iii. 444—God the only rest of, iii. 449, *et seq.*—God the chief good of, iii. 451—vague notions of, entertained by the ancients, ix. 28—opinions of the learned of Egypt concerning, ix. 67—the immateriality of, ix. 472—its reception into blessedness at death, xii. 13—the intermediate and separate state of, xii. 14
- “*Soul of the world*,” a heathen attribute of deity, ix. 502
- South Africa*, importance of Missions there, i. 293
- *America*, effect of revolutions in, on the Church of Rome, viii. 216—is open for the light of divine truth, viii. 216—the encouragement to schools, viii. 217, *et seq.*—circulation of the Scriptures, viii. 223, *et seq.*—progress of religious toleration in, viii. 229, *et seq.*
- Southey*, Robert, Esq., LL.D., character of his “*Life of Wes-*

ley," i. 311 ; v. 353 ; vii. 408  
 —his superficial acquaintance  
 with vital godliness, i. 316—  
 his great temerity, i. 317—  
 Watson's "Observations" on  
 his "Life of Wesley," i. 318—  
 his opinion on Mr. Wesley  
 refusing the rectory of Ep-  
 worth, v. 24—his philosophic  
 solution of the account of the  
 conversion of Mr. Wesley, v.  
 59—on the state of the Church  
 at the Restoration, v. 62—ani-  
 madverts satirically on the  
 doctrine of assurance, v. 86—  
 charges Mr. Wesley with hav-  
 ing formed a plan of separation,  
 v. 99—animadversion on his  
 flippant and callous remarks  
 on the persecutions of the  
 early Methodists, v. 133, 483  
 —his candid account of the  
 affair between Mr. and Mrs.  
 Wesley, v. 202—his remarks  
 on the Calvinistic controversy,  
 v. 227—his deplorable igno-  
 rance of theological subjects,  
 v. 355—his great want of ge-  
 neral principles by which he  
 ought to have been governed  
 in his "Life of Wesley," v.  
 355—his observations on the  
 conversion of Mr. Wesley, v.  
 359, *et seq.*—false philosophi-  
 cal principles by which he is  
 governed, v. 371—sneers at  
 the alleged providential call  
 of Mr. Wesley, v. 372-374—  
 his defective views of the  
 Christian ministry, v. 375—  
 his views of the effects pro-  
 duced by the preaching of  
 Whitefield, v. 376—attributes  
 the success of Mr. Wesley's  
 preaching to the tact and de-  
 sign of man, v. 377-379—his  
 unscriptural notions contro-  
 verted, v. 379-384—charges  
 the founders of Methodism  
 with gross enthusiasm, v. 385  
 —the charge examined, v. 386  
 —allows enthusiasm in every  
 thing but religion, v. 385—an  
 enthusiast himself, v. 387—  
 attributes all irregularities in

Methodism to enthusiasm, v.  
 389—considers the doctrine of  
 assurance an instance of gross  
 enthusiasm, v. 392—his pious  
 horror at the records in Mr.  
 Wesley's Journal, v. 411—his  
 views of scriptural conversion  
 condemned, v. 412—animad-  
 versions on his remarks on  
 sudden conversions, v. 414, *et  
 seq.*—his remarks on the ex-  
 travagancies of Methodism, v.  
 424—accuses Mr. Wesley of  
 boasting, v. 426—delights in  
 tracing a comparison between  
 the Methodists and Papists, v.  
 430—his defective reasoning  
 upon what he terms the ex-  
 travagancies of Methodism, v.  
 431—his error in considering  
 the effects of Mr. Wesley's  
 preaching new and peculiar,  
 v. 432—his ignorance of eccle-  
 siastical history, v. 433—is de-  
 plorably deficient in acquaint-  
 ance with the doctrine of  
 divine influence, v. 434—con-  
 sideres the extravagancies of  
 Methodism as the occurrence  
 of a new disease, v. 438—  
 attributes an effect produced  
 by Mr. Grimshawe's preaching  
 to galvanism, v. 439—his  
 vague conceptions of religious  
 enthusiasm, v. 442—further  
 remarks on the "new disease,"  
 v. 446 (n)—judges more fairly  
 than others of the question  
 concerning separation from the  
 Church, v. 449—his remarks  
 on the tendency of Wesley's  
 proceedings to produce that  
 effect, v. 457—charges Me-  
 thodism with alienating the  
 people from the Church, v.  
 464, *et seq.*—his erroneous  
 construction of a passage in  
 the Minutes of Conference, v.  
 473—animadversions on his  
 unfair quotations from the ser-  
 mons of Wesley and Fletcher,  
 v. 476, *et seq.*—his inability to  
 comprehend the motives of  
 Wesley and his coadjutors, v.  
 482—his ignorant censure of

- band-meetings and watch-nights, v. 485—the erroneous views which he entertained concerning them, v. 490—his error concerning the settlement of Methodist chapels, v. 492—is mistaken as to the cause of the separation of Wesley and Whitefield, v. 493—his string of charges against Methodism refuted, v. 493–497—attacks what he calls Mr. Wesley's "voracious credulity," v. 498—charges Mr. Wesley with ambition, spiritual pride, and love of power, v. 504–512—contrast between the character of Mr. Wesley and Mr. Southey, v. 513
- Sovereign*, God as such, is habitually to be remembered, viii. 386
- Sovereignty of God*, Calvinistic views of, xi. 488—scriptural sense of the, xi. 488—Mr. Wesley's sentiments respecting the, xi. 490
- Spain*, state of, a proof that schemes of human wisdom, alone are unable to ameliorate man's moral condition, ii. 487—bright prospects of a reformation in, viii. 81; fearful results of its suppression, viii. 82
- Spangenberg*, Rev. Mr., questions Mr. Wesley on the "witness of the Spirit," v. 35
- Sparta*, cruelties practised by the youth of, ix. 77; xii. 315—immoral tendency of many of the laws of, ix. 79
- Speaking*, peculiar character of extemporaneous, vii. 468
- Special District-Meetings*, Methodistically constitutional, vii. 104—purposes for which they were provided, vii. 104, 105—their powers of interference, stated, vii. 106—not merely exercise jurisdiction over Preachers, vii. 114, *et seq.*
- Speech*, given to Adam, at his creation, vi. 61
- Spineto*, Marquess, his "Lectures on Hieroglyphics and Egyptian Antiquities," reviewed, viii. 159–190—his account of the deciphering the Rosetta stone, viii. 164, *et seq.*—on the origin of idolatry in Egypt, viii. 169—on the origin of letters, viii. 169, *et seq.*—his opinion respecting the antiquity of letters, examined, viii. 171, *et seq.*—his conjectures concerning the Pharaoh who reigned at the exodus of the Israelites, viii. 180
- Spinoza*, Benedict, his absurd definition of a miracle, ix. 102—antidote to the theory of, furnished by David Hume, ix. 382
- Spirit*, God is a, illustrated, iv. 483—nature of his spiritual essence, iv. 484—is present every where, iv. 484—is omniscient, iv. 484—his ceaseless activity, iv. 484—his unchangeable nature, iv. 486—how God is worshipped in spirit, iv. 493
- "—*of adoption*," import of the phrase, iv. 291. See *Adoption*.
- "—*of bondage*," meaning of the expression, iv. 290
- of holiness*, a term applied to the divine nature of Jesus Christ, x. 247, *et seq.*
- "—*of the age*," expectations from the, vii. 445
- Spirits*, discernment of, an extraordinary gift of the Spirit, iii. 381
- , glorified, the question whether or no, they are free agents, considered, iii. 30—happy condition of, in eternity, iii. 34—distinction between a "spirit" and an "angel," xii. 17. See *Angels*.
- Spiritual adultery*, described, iii. 374
- *gift*, what St. Paul meant by the phrase, ii. 269
- *life*, a promise made to us in Christ, ii. 457—in what it consists, vi. 348; x. 441
- Spirituality of God*, defined, ix.

- 470—scriptural view of the, ix. 471—defended against the cavils of infidelity, ix. 471, *et seq.*
- Sprinkling*, baptism by, validity of, acknowledged by the primitive church, xii. 270—import of the term “baptize,” considered, xii. 272
- Stackhouse*, Thomas, on the way of distinguishing a real miracle, ix. 105—on the miracles of Christianity, ix. 179, *et seq.*—on the necessity of a revelation, to ascertain the existence of God, ix. 376
- Stanhope*, George, D.D., on the high dignity of the Son of God, x. 249
- Stanley*, Rev. Jacob, his “Popery indefensible,” and his “Remarks on Tyson’s Attack on Protestantism,” reviewed, vii. 441–453—character of these publications. vii. 451
- Stars*, the creation of, considered, vi. 21—whether they are inhabited, or not, vi. 22—conjectures respecting the objects contemplated in their creation, vi. 22
- Stephanas*, baptism of the house of, considered, xii. 261
- Stephen*, his exemplary character, ii. 419—his conduct before the Council, ii. 420—his attitude, ii. 421—the divine aid vouchsafed to, ii. 422—the vision with which he was favoured, ii. 423; for the confirmation of his faith, ii. 423; for inspiring comfort, ii. 424—his death, one of prayer and faith, ii. 428; of certainty and charity, ii. 429; a death of peace, ii. 430—his triumph in death, ii. 443—his character as a primitive Preacher, iii. 36—why in his oration he alluded to so many points of Jewish history, vi. 243—the striking picture exhibited at his martyrdom, vi. 244
- Stewardship*, a doctrine peculiar to Christianity, ii. 354—in what respects a Christian is a steward of his Lord’s goods, iii. 7
- Stewart*, Dugald, Esq., F.R.S., on the fallacy of Hume’s theory, concerning cause and effect, ix. 381—his “Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind,” quoted, ix. 382—on the terms “matter” and “mind,” ix. 484
- Stillingfleet*, Edward, D.D., quoted, on man’s liability to sin, vi. 33—on the opinions of the ancient philosophers, ix. 63—on the moral agency of man, x. 419—on the import of the prepositions *πρὸς* and *ἀπὸ*, xi. 31—on the impulsive cause of the death of Christ, xi. 33—on the existence of wrath in God, xi. 43—on the conditions of man’s reconciliation to God, xi. 50—on the mode of worship in the primitive church, xii. 175
- Sting of death*, import of the term, iii. 428—in what it consists, iii. 428, *et seq.*
- Stock*, Bishop, on the phrase “everlasting Father,” x. 289
- Stoics*, opinions of the, viii. 23—their notions of a divine Providence, ix. 66; xii. 313; and futurity, ix. 71—lax views of, on the evil of lying, ix. 80
- Stonehenge*, allusion to, ix. 156; xii. 337
- Strabo*, his allusion to Moses, ix. 149
- Stranger*, the character of the Christian on earth, ii. 344
- “*Strangers*,” import of the term as used by St. Peter, vi. 318
- Strive*, meaning of the phrase “strive to enter,” iii. 267—the difficulties against which the Christian has to strive, iii. 267, 268—the period limited and uncertain in which to, iii. 268
- Study*, how far advantageous to a Christian Minister, iii. 96
- Sturm*, C. C., his “Reflections on the Works of God,” referred to, ix. 403; x. 50

- Style*, difference of, in the Scriptures, accounted for, vi. 13
- Subjects*, scriptural view of the duties of, xii. 154—subjection and obedience, how far required, xii. 155—when resistance to the supreme power is consistent with the subjects' duty, xii. 156, *et seq.*—character of the resistance offered, xii. 159, *et seq.*—duty of, in case of the existence of rival supreme powers, xii. 163—special duties of Christian subjects, xii. 164. See *Government*, *King*, &c.
- Submission to God*, a mark of a heart that is right, iii. 149—a principle of acceptable worship, iii. 209—manifested in St. Paul, iii. 231—a trait of inward religion, iv. 350—an important part of spiritual worship, iv. 493—a duty which men owe to God, xii. 44
- Substitution*, objections to the evangelical doctrine of, considered, xi. 29, *et seq.*
- Succession*, the argument for the apostolic succession, noticed, xii. 179—its futility, xii. 180
- Suetonius*, his reference to the person and character of Christ, ix. 150
- Suffering*, why it is in the world, ii. 76—power of the Gospel enabling us to endure, ii. 278
- Sufferings of Christ*, character of the, ii. 294—the crowning purpose of the incarnation of the Son of God, ii. 435—mysterious depth of, from whence derived, iii. 117—connected with the crucifixion, iv. 116—the necessity for these sufferings, vi. 41—circumstances connected with, vi. 212, *et seq.*—absolute importance of, vi. 308—were unparalleled and inconceivable, viii. 544—vicarious character of, harmonizes with the perfections of God, ix. 300—how connected with the justification of the sinner, xi. 79. See *Death of Christ*, *Atonement*, *Sacrifice*.
- Suicide*, the unlawfulness of, xii. 115—why the Mosaic law is silent as to the punishment of suicide, xii. 116—the crime forbidden in Scripture, xii. 116—lax views of, entertained by some writers, xii. 117—recognised as murder in the word of God, xii. 118—in what the essence of the crime consists, xii. 119. See *Murder*.
- Συμβολον*, explained, vii. 497
- Sumner*, John Bird, Bishop, on the heathen notion of the ubiquity of the Deity, ix. 502—on the connexion and dependence of the works of God, x. 55
- Sun*, Sir W. Herschel's theory of the, ix. 348—creation of, ix. 349—the work of the fourth day, considered, ix. 350
- Superstition*, how distinguished from idolatry, ii. 482—a feature of the present state of Heathenism, iii. 465—the great cause of, iv. 186—of the Heathen, considered, iv. 211—striking instance of, in Burmah, viii. 90—the fruitful parent of corruption in religion, ix. 58
- Supplies*, of the church, described, iv. 42
- Swedenborg*, Emmanuel, Baron, general character of his writings, v. 222—as an expositor, viii. 73
- Swine*, forbidden to be kept by the Jews, vi. 194
- Sword*, sometimes overruled for the spread of the Gospel, ii. 366—of the Spirit, what, iv. 433, 436—how this weapon should be wielded, iv. 437
- Sychem*, where situated, vi. 176
- Sykes*, A. A., D.D., his character as an expositor, viii. 72
- Symbols*, symbolic representations common to Christianity and Paganism, ii. 326
- Sympathy*, a pleasure peculiar to man, ii. 70

*Synagogues*, when established, vi. 118—were numerous in Egypt, vi. 124—ruler of the, his office described, vi. 189—a great number in Judea, vi. 189—period in which service was performed in them, vi. 189—officers of the, mentioned, xii. 174, *et seq.*

*Synod of Antioch*, on Christ being the Jehovah of the Old Testament, x. 185

## T.

*Tabernacle*, of Moses, of what a type, vi. 86—services performed there, x. 163—in what respect these services were typical, xi. 104

*Tabernacles*, feast of, when instituted, vi. 200—our Lord's proceeding at, alluded to, vi. 200—custom of the Jews at this festival, vi. 200

*Tables of the law*, why deposited in the ark, iv. 172—their connexion with the mercy-seat, illustrated, iv. 171–176

*Tabu*, breaking of the, in the Sandwich Islands, described, viii. 100

*Tacitus*, alludes to the destruction of Sodom, vi. 67—to the cruel treatment of slaves among the ancients, ix. 77; xii. 315—to Moses, ix. 149; xii. 333—to the person and character of Christ, ix. 150; xii. 333—his account of the early success of Christianity, ix. 320; xii. 333

*Talboys*, Rev. Thomas, defended against the accusations of Mr. Marryatt, vi. 478, *et seq.*—persecuting treatment of Governor Hislop, towards him, vi. 482—testimonials in favour of the good conduct of, vi. 484

*Talent*, comparative value of a, vi. 199—import of the term, when applied to man, vi. 359

*Talmud*, the, described, vi. 125

*Tamehameha*, an intelligent King

of the Sandwich Islands, viii. 97—his plans for the improvement of his subjects, viii. 99

*Targum of Jerusalem*, on the phrases “the Word,” and “the Word of the Lord,” x. 271

*Targums*, the, described, vi. 125—adopt the use of the term “Logos,” x. 269—the origin of, x. 269—agreement among, in the meaning of the words “Memra,” and “the Word,” x. 273

*Tartarus*, origin of the term, viii. 183

*Taste the heavenly gift*, scripture import of the phrase, xi. 291

*Taylor*, Bishop, observation of, on vital godliness, i. 318—defective character of his writings, v. 14—on the principles of Southey, is as great an enthusiast as Whitefield, v. 386, 388—recognises the principle on which band-meetings were instituted, v. 489—on congregational singing, viii. 324—on the morality of Christianity, ix. 317—on the justice of God, x. 36—his erroneous views of the doctrine of justification, xi. 229

——, Charles, his “Facts and Evidences on the Subject of Baptism,” quoted, xii. 247

——, Dr. John, his “Key to the Apostolic Writings,” character of, i. 111—on the term “Angel of the Lord,” x. 167—objections of, to the doctrine respecting the original state of man, refuted, x. 390, 396—his views of the penalty of death, examined, x. 443—his theory of justification delusive and absurd, xi. 246

*Teacher*, an important office of the Holy Spirit, ii. 212—denoting Christ, as the Teacher sent from God, ii. 321—mode of Christ's teaching, iv. 188; vi. 201—duty of, under the Christian dispensation, iv. 510

- of Sunday-schools, character of, ii. 56; iv. 512—Jewish Teachers depreciated the authority of Paul, vi. 278—who they were in the primitive church, vi. 285; xii. 170
- Tears*, absence of, in heaven, iv. 19—none of separation, iv. 19—none of pain or sorrow, iv. 20—and none of joy, iv. 20
- Temperance*, the obligation of, not indicated by the works, &c., of God, ix. 12
- Temple of Jerusalem*, the erection of the second predicted, iii. 274—an eminent type of the church, iii. 401—re-building of the, vi. 118—the second temple contrasted with the first, vi. 120—its deficiencies, vi. 120—Haggai's prediction concerning, considered, vi. 121—the temple of Onias in Egypt, vi. 125—driving the traders from the, vi. 188—Christ's appearance there among the Doctors, vi. 221—a figure taken from, employed by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, vi. 282
- , spiritual, of God, of what it consists, ii. 376—parallel between it and the temple of Jerusalem, iii. 128—why the soul of man is compared to a temple, iii. 129—its erection predicted, iii. 274
- Temptation*, victory over, promised, ii. 457—how it places a bias on the judgment, iii. 99—variety of, by which men are assailed, iv. 36—how most effectually resisted, iv. 38—simply considered, not a sin, iv. 38—works for the good of God's people, viii. 458
- *of Christ*, mysterious nature of the, iv. 32—not an allegory, iv. 33—how the attack was made, iv. 34—the question, "Did Satan know it was Christ whom he assaulted?" considered, iv. 35; vi. 187—a mark of the humiliation of Christ, iv. 36—how the tempter was foiled, iv. 377—practical truths taught by this event, vi. 187
- Tent-maker*, why Paul learned the trade of, vi. 245
- Tenison*, Thomas, D.D., on the gross ignorance of the Heathen ix. 62
- Ten tribes*, conjectures respecting their existence, vi. 116
- Terence*, his lax views of the evil of fornication, ix. 79
- Tertullian*, charges the heathen poets and philosophers with borrowing from the sacred writers, ix. 46—on the early progress of Christianity, ix. 321—on Christ being the Jehovah of the Old Testament, x. 184—on the form of baptism, x. 371—on the imputation of faith for righteousness, xi. 206—nature of his opposition to infant-baptism, considered, xii. 264—acknowledged the validity of baptism, by immersion and sprinkling, xii. 270
- Testimony*, of the Spirit, to our adoption, how borne, iv. 294; its nature, iv. 295—character of the testimony of the sacred writers, ix. 198, *et seq.*; if false, might have been easily disproved, ix. 199
- Τῆς υποστάσεως αὐτοῦ*, explained, vii. 41
- Tetragrammaton*, the incommunicable name, ix. 488
- Thanksgiving*, public days of, valuable and important, iv. 239
- Thebes*, the ruins of, described, vii. 347
- Theft*, ancient laws against, noticed, ix. 79—but grossly violated where Christianity is not known, ix. 80; xii. 316
- Theist*, views of a, on the revealed will of God, ix. 11—mode of reconciling the administration of the government of God, examined, ix. 17—cannot consistently object



- to the circumstances of the flood, ix. 39
- Theological institution*, Wesleyan, an early topic of conversation in the Methodist Conference, v. 186—the reason why its establishment was postponed, v. 186
- Theology*, not to be treated as the sciences, vii. 201—of the Patriarchs, embodied in the book of Job, ix. 87—its connexion with the natural world, x. 118, 119
- Theophilus*, of Antioch, on Christ being the Jehovah of the Old Testament, x. 185
- Thessalonians*, first Epistle to the, when written, vi. 298—its peculiar character, vi. 299—distinguishing object of the second Epistle to the, vi. 300
- Thessalonica*, introduction of the Gospel into that city, vi. 298
- “*Things that are made*,” meaning of the phrase, iii. 402
- “*—— which are seen*,” described, as temporal, viii. 441—as bounded by time, viii. 442—and as more brief than life, viii. 443—awful influence of, on the mind, viii. 448, *et seq.*
- “*—— which are not seen*,” described, viii. 444, *et seq.*—the eternal God, viii. 444, *et seq.*—the invisible world, viii. 445—the happy effect of, on the heart, viii. 450
- Thomas Aquinas*, his theological system, xi. 417—on baptism by sprinkling, xii. 270
- Thompson*, Thomas, Esq., of Hull, characteristic sketch of, by Mr. Watson, i. 485
- Thomson*, James, his “Letters on the moral and religious State of South America,” &c., reviewed, viii. 215–234—character of the work, viii. 215—his encouragement in the establishment of schools, viii. 217, *et seq.*
- “*Thorn in the flesh*,” what it was, vi. 276
- Thoughts*, which the knowledge of Christ makes familiar to man, iii. 49—not the result of organization, ix. 741
- Three*, the, witnesses, remarks on the disputed passage respecting, x. 143
- Throne of God*, what implied in the term, iv. 145—majesty and brightness of, iv. 269
- *of grace*, the phrase explained, iv. 174
- Thrones*, principalities, and powers, created for Jesus, ii. 291
- Thyatira*, evils to which the church at was exposed, viii. 48
- Tillotson*, Archbishop, on the understanding of God, x. 4—on the mercy of God, x. 91, *et seq.*—on the holiness of God, x. 97—his imperfect view of the doctrine of justification, noticed, xi. 229
- Time*, meaning of the term, iv. 196—“redeeming the time,” import of the phrase, iv. 198—the commencement of, when, vi. 19—brevity of, in regard to individuals, viii. 442
- Timothy*, is sent by Paul to Corinth, vi. 268—his history and character, vi. 303—when Paul’s Epistles to him were written, vi. 304; their subject, vi. 304—the circumcision of, by St. Paul, considered, xii. 228, 230, 243
- Tindal*, Matthew, the infidel, moral character of, ix. 312
- Titles of Christ*, an important argument in favour of his divinity, x. 189—that of “Jehovah,” considered, x. 190—of “Lord,” x. 194—of “God,” x. 196, *et seq.*—great importance of, x. 196, *et seq.*—“Emmanuel,” x. 202—expressive of divinity, x. 203—“the Lord their God,” x. 204—“the Word,” x. 204, 266—“Great God, and our Saviour,” x. 208—“the true God,” x. 213—“God blessed for ever,” x. 214, *et seq.*—its high authority, x. 215—“King of Israel,” x.

- 218—"Son of God," x. 220—  
 "the Wisdom of God," x. 230  
 —the "only begotten of the  
 Father," x. 239
- Titus*, who he was: character of  
 Paul's Epistle to, vi. 305
- Titus Vespasian*, the Roman com-  
 mander who subdued Jerusa-  
 lem, vi. 205—the triumphal  
 arch of, at Rome, alluded to,  
 vi. 209—the pretended mira-  
 cles of, ix. 232
- Toleration*, the laws of, recog-  
 nised in all the dependencies  
 of the British crown, vi. 521
- Tomline*, Bishop, on the preser-  
 vation of the Scriptures, ix.  
 186, *et seq.*—on Christ, a Son  
 over his own house, x. 252—  
 his theory respecting the faith  
 which justifies, exploded,  
 xi. 238—his "Refutation of  
 Calvinism," quoted, xi. 238, *et  
 seq.*—its peculiar excellency,  
 xi. 416—his remarks on the  
 present order of Bishops,  
 Priests, and Deacons, xii. 183  
 —on the Popish doctrine of  
 the eucharist, xii. 290
- Tongues*, confusion of, will of  
 God respecting the, vi. 60  
 —, gift of, an extraordinary  
 work of the Holy Spirit, iii.  
 380—modern error respecting  
 this gift, iv. 391—its nature  
 and object, iv. 391—a most un-  
 equivocal miracle, vi. 242  
 —, *of fire*, of what an em-  
 blem, iv. 327
- Toplady*, Rev. Augustus, his  
 scurrility and vulgar abuse as  
 a controvertist, v. 240
- Townley*, Rev. James, D.D., his  
 "Reasons for the Law of Mo-  
 ses, from the 'More Nevochim'  
 of Maimonides," &c., reviewed,  
 vii. 516–528—in what the ex-  
 cellency of this work consists,  
 vii. 517
- Tracts*, religious, Mr. Wesley an  
 early writer and distributor of,  
 v. 143
- Traders*, driven from the temple,  
 vi. 188
- Tradition*, concerning the crea-  
 tion and fall, vi. 48; ix. 47,  
 48—of the Mosaic paradise,  
 among the classic poets, al-  
 luded to, vi. 49—corroborates  
 the Mosaic record, vi. 50—  
 concerning the serpent, ix. 48—  
 an imperfect mode of commu-  
 nicating a revelation, ix. 90—  
 testimony of, to the truth of  
 the Mosaic account of the fall,  
 x. 412, *et seq.*
- Traduction*, the doctrine of, con-  
 sidered, x. 485, *et seq.*
- Trajan*, the Emperor, patronised  
 gladiatorial combats, ix. 76—  
 allusion of, to Jesus Christ, ix.  
 168—the letter of Pliny to,  
 quoted, xii. 213
- Tranquillity of the church*, de-  
 scribed, iv. 41
- Transfiguration of Christ*, of what  
 typical, ii. 234—an exhibition  
 of the body of Christ glorified,  
 ii. 391—was the glory which the  
 disciples beheld, ii. 437—why  
 Peter, James, and John accom-  
 panied the Saviour, iii. 86—  
 the glory of, described, iii. 86—  
 was the official introduction of  
 the Saviour on his mediatorial  
 work, iii. 87; and a confirma-  
 tion of the prophetic dispensa-  
 tion, iii. 90—lessons to be learn-  
 ed from, iii. 92, 93—ends de-  
 signed by, vi. 198—why only  
 three Apostles chosen to behold  
 it, vi. 229
- Transgression*, the phrase "finish  
 the transgression," explained,  
 iii. 386
- Transubstantiation*, monstrosity  
 of this doctrine, vi. 211; xii.  
 288, *et seq.*—contradictory to  
 reason, vii. 70; ix. 137—but in  
 a different sense when applied  
 to doctrines referring to the  
 divine nature, vii. 71—the ori-  
 gin of this heresy, stated, vii.  
 458
- Treasure*, evangelical, in earthen  
 vessels, illustrated, iv. 159—  
 "laid up in heaven," meaning  
 of the phrase, viii. 512
- Tree of life*, as exhibited in the  
 primitive paradise, iii. 68—

- why so called, iii. 68, 69—various hypotheses concerning, iii. 69, 354—a term applied to heavenly wisdom, iii. 69, 354—considered in the light of a sacrament, iii. 69, 354; vi. 35—why the fruit was forbidden after the fall, iii. 69, 354; vi. 35—Christ a substitution for, iii. 70—its being placed in the heavenly paradise, considered, iii. 74—access to, prevented by the fall, iii. 354—the prohibition of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, vi. 31—a prohibition obviously fitted to the condition and circumstances of man, vi. 32—supposed nature of the fruit of the tree of life, vi. 34
- Trent*, Council of, on the doctrine of justification, xi. 226—on the nature of sacraments, xii. 216
- Tribute money*, nature of that paid by our Lord, vi. 199—the amount of the tax, vi. 199—how produced, vi. 199
- Trinity*, connected with the scenes of redemption, iv. 325—manifested in the work of creation, vi. 20—exhibited in the peculiarity of Moses's account of the creation, vi. 20—Bishop Horsely's testimony respecting, vi. 21—the application of the term "Father" to the first person, an argument in favour of the eternal sonship of Christ, vii. 11—a doctrine of revelation, viii. 464; x. 109—folly of attempting an explanation of, x. 110—theory of types and symbols of the doctrine, noticed, x. 110—on the word "person," not being used in the Scripture, x. 113—on the unity of the three persons in the Godhead, x. 114—on the importance of the doctrine, x. 115, *et seq.*—evil of denying it, x. 120—closely associated with morals, x. 119, *et seq.*—with our love to God, x. 122—a denial of, derogatory to the love of Christ, x. 123; would destroy the foundation of the Christian scheme, x. 124; lessens the evil of sin, x. 125; alters the character of Christian experience, x. 126; interferes with the spiritual affections of the heart, x. 128; and impugns the credit of the Scriptures, x. 129—its relation with the frame, &c., of Christianity, x. 132—difficulties connected with the doctrine, adverted to, x. 133—the plural appellations of the Most High, considered, x. 136—the plural form, how accounted for by the heterodox, x. 138—strength of the argument does not rest on the plural appellation, x. 139—scripture testimony to the existence of three persons in the Godhead, x. 140, *et seq.*—when the term "Trinity" came into use, x. 140—illustrated by the vision of Isaiah, x. 141—the great proof on which the doctrine rests, x. 144—is consistent with the divine unity, x. 146—on prayer addressed to one or other of the three persons in the Godhead, x. 147
- Trust in God*, powerful reasons for, ii. 87—the foundation of, iv. 24—to be habitually exercised, viii. 392—a duty which men owe to God, xii. 48—its nature, xii. 48—motives for, xii. 49—salutary influence of, xii. 50
- Truth*, the nature of that which should form the basis of religious education, ii. 46–50—Gospel truth is divinely revealed, ii. 320; iv. 508—triumphs over error, ii. 442; iii. 198—instruction in, the end of the Christian ministry, iii. 96—its comprehensive nature, iii. 97—to be applied and enforced by the Ministers of the cross, iii. 98—a distinguishing appellation given to the Gospel, iii. 410—knowledge of, necessary to salvation, iii. 413—for the

- manifestation of, God is said to be raised up, iii. 475—of Scripture, considered, iv. 46—gift of, granted with Christ, iv. 121—how displayed in the Son of God, iv. 134—the only basis on which religion can rest, iv. 186—our belief in, tried, iv. 374—the phrase, “know the truth,” explained, iv. 402—“loins girt with,” explained, iv. 433—how God is worshipped in “truth,” iv. 491—possession of, the great privilege of a nation, iv. 507—necessary for the advance of morality, iv. 514—palpable absurdity of submitting revealed truth to the test of human reason, vii. 52, *et seq.*—origin of those truths which are found in the writings of Paganism, ix. 33, *et seq.*; xii. 310—unknown in regions of Heathenism, ix. 80—embraces veracity and faithfulness, x. 104—once lost, is not in the power of human reason to restore it, xii. 312
- Truth of God*, no hope of mercy derived from a mere contemplation of, iii. 356—illustrated by the death of Christ, iii. 359—Christ the image of, iv. 311—defined, x. 104—scripture views of, x. 104—two branches of its manifestation, x. 104. See *Truth*.
- Trypho*, the Jew, on the punishment of crucifixion, vi. 213
- Turkey*, enfeebled condition of, vii. 359
- “*Turning to God*,” meaning of the phrase, vi. 345
- Twisse*, William, D.D., an apologist of Calvin, noticed, xi. 415
- Types*, are not mere resemblances, iii. 441—fault of making them, noticed, iii. 441—importance of, anterior to the advent of the Son of God, iv. 168—a common mode of divine instruction, iv. 308—theological definition of, vi. 85; xi. 101—error in the interpretation of, alluded to, vi. 85; xi. 101—of the Old Testament, how explained, viii. 77—leading properties of, xi. 101—in what respects the Levitical law was typical, xi. 102, *et seq.*
- Types*, personal, often used by the Jewish Prophets, iii. 123—Joshua the High Priest, one of Christ, iii. 123—explained by the writings of St. Paul, iii. 281—Melchizedek, a type of Christ, iii. 441
- , scriptural, eminently fulfilled in the crucifixion, iii. 395—great object of, iii. 395
- Typhon*, the serpent of the Egyptian mythology, ix. 49
- Typical things* largely explained in the writings of St. Paul, iii. 281—the Passover, a type of the Messiah, iii. 396—types not mere resemblances, iii. 441—typical blood under the law, considered, iv. 175
- Tzeror Hammor*, on the term “the Word of the Lord,” x. 270

## U.

- Ulpian*, on the term “satisfaction,” xi. 72
- Unbelief*, practical unbelief, a great trial of true faith, iv. 376—the guilt of, x. 121
- Unclean animals*, and clean, distinction between, accounted for, xi. 117
- Understanding*, human, limited character of the, ii. 297—a seat of inward religion, iv. 347
- *of God*, scripture views of, x. 5
- Unity*, blessedness of Christian unity, i. 217—of the church, in what it consists, xii. 185
- *of God*, testimony of Scripture concerning, ix. 461—nature of the, ix. 461—arguments in proof of, ix. 462, *et seq.*—connexion between the argument for his self-existence and his unity traced, ix. 466—importance of the doc-

- trine of, ix. 470; x. 135, 144—consistent with the doctrine of the Trinity, x. 146
- Universal*, a peculiar character of the sacrifice of Christ, viii. 546
- *government*, given into the hands of the Son, ii. 303
- “——— *history*,” the, alluded to, on Zoroaster and the Zend, ix. 53
- Universe*, visible, why it was made for Christ, ii. 287—contains a manifestation of God, ii. 438
- Universities*, national, inadequacy of the, to meet the wants of the nation, vii. 393—defect of, in the religion taught, vii. 395
- University of London*, auspices under which it was commenced, vii. 392—impolicy of, in imposing silence on all religious subjects, vii. 394—danger of the propagation of deadly error, vii. 395—inefficiency of means to counteract this, vii. 395—a suitable University yet a desideratum, vii. 396—importance of guarding the appointment of Professors in the, vii. 397—its “leading principle,” illustrated, vii. 397—evils to be apprehended from it, vii. 402—remarks on the appointment of a Hebrew Professor, vii. 404
- Unrighteousness*, scripture import of the term, xi. 314
- Unsearchableness of God*, considered, x. 107
- Unworthiness*, a sense of, a concomitant of true faith, ii. 460
- Υπερ, “instead of,” illustrated, xi. 30
- Υποστασις, explained, x. 113
- Upright*, meaning of the term, ii. 347
- Urim and Thummim*, what supposed to have been, vi. 110—wanting in the second temple, vi. 120
- Usher*, Archbishop, on the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, v. 402; xi. 270
- Utility*, marks of, in the works of God, demonstrated, ix. 404, *et seq.*
- V.
- Vain deceit*, against which Paul warned the Colossians, described, vi. 293, 294
- Valentia*, Lord, his “Travels,” quoted, on the dividing of the Red Sea, ix. 205
- Valerius Maximus*, a pretended miracle recorded by him, ix. 238
- Van Mildert*, Bishop, on the supposed improved state of the reason of man, ix. 94, 95—combats the opinion of Voltaire on miracles, ix. 103—his refutation of Hume on miracles, ix. 108—on the weakness of human reason, ix. 133—on the miracles of Scripture, ix. 233–235—on the necessity of a revelation to ascertain the existence of a God, ix. 376
- Variety*, in the works of God, a mark of wisdom, x. 52—the riches of this variety, exemplified, x. 53—the moral ends of, x. 54—variety of magnitude, x. 54
- Various readings*, in manuscripts of the Gospels, described, vi. 173—their number and character, vi. 173—common in all ancient books, vi. 174—the value of such discrepancies, vi. 174
- Vaudois*, the, successful resistance of, to Popish domination, vii. 455—opposed the earliest departure from the true faith, vii. 456—antiquity of, as a church, vii. 457—instrumental in the promotion of the Reformation, vii. 459—their character for loyalty, vii. 460—the sanguinary persecutions they endured, vii. 460, 461—interference of the Protestant states in behalf of, vii. 461—Milton’s sonnet on the massa-

- cre of, vii. 461—persecution of, renewed, vii. 462—the enterprise of Henri Arnaud, referred to, vii. 462, 463—Protestant benevolence towards, vii. 461, 463—the Missionary character of the Waldensian Church, vii. 464—the purity of the doctrines of, alluded to, vii. 465—the ancient and modern confession of the faith of, on the doctrines of election and predestination, xi. 440—the political conduct of, justified, xii. 164
- Vedius*, Pollio, his cruel treatment of his slaves, ix. 77; xii. 315
- Vegetation*, an illustration of design in the works of God, ix. 418
- Veil*, the phrase “within the veil,” illustrated, iv. 321, *et seq.*
- Veneration of God*, a mark of a heart that is right, iii. 149
- Venomous animals*, considered, whether an evil, x. 63
- Vernon*, Edward, D.D., Archbishop of York, his “Sermon preached at the Coronation of George IV.,” reviewed, vii. 507–510—different from the generality of court sermons, vii. 507
- Vertebral column*, an illustration of design in the works of God, ix. 438, *et seq.*
- “*Vessels of wrath*,” to be distinguished from “vessels unto dishonour,” xi. 324
- Veysie*, Rev. Mr., quoted, on the figurative language of Scripture, xi. 112
- Vicarious character*, of the death of Christ considered, xi. 30, *et seq.*; and of the sacrifices under the law, xi. 90—objections to this view, considered, xi. 91, *et seq.* See *Atonement*, *Death of Christ*.
- Vice*, the fruitful parent of misery, ii. 76—man displace at the vices in which he indulges, iii. 137—of men, raises the judgments of God, iii. 473—increase of, connected with the increase of error, iv. 65
- Victim*, innocent, why required as atonement for sin, iii. 115
- Victory*, over death and the grave, how achieved, iii. 432—a benefit of the atonement, xii. 13
- Vile*, why this term is applied to the human body, ii. 386
- Vindictive justice*, defined, x. 99
- Virgil*, his reference to the Sibylline books, alluded to, ix. 51—the providence acknowledged in the *Æneid* of, ix. 66—considered the doctrine of a future state a vulgar fable, ix. 73
- Virgins*, parable of the wise and foolish, considered, iv. 97, *et seq.*—resemblance between them, iv. 99—their important and serious distinction, iv. 100—the tarrying of the bridegroom, iv. 101—their conduct at the approach of the bridegroom, iv. 105—persons represented by these characters, iv. 105, 106
- Virtue*, nature of, defined, ii. 244—dependent on knowledge, ii. 244—Christian virtue described, ii. 251—the existence of certain virtues among the unregenerate, accounted for, x. 488, *et seq.*
- Vision*, of Jesus to Stephen at his martyrdom, considered, ii. 423–425—the phrase, “to seal up the vision,” explained, .iii. 391—why not common in the present day, iv. 144
- Visitation*, day of, meaning of the term, iv. 5; as it regards nations, iv. 5; and individuals, iv. 7—peculiar interpositions of Providence considered as such, iv. 7—how neglected by the Jews, iv. 8; by the primitive churches, iv. 9; and by individuals, iv. 10
- Vitrunga*, on the terms “hades,” and “sheol,” viii. 289—on the evidence of prophecy, ix. 120

- Vizelle*, Mrs., married to the Rev. John Wesley, v. 201—her character and conduct noticed, v. 202, 203—Mr. Southey's account of, v. 202, 203
- Vladimir the Great*, an account of his embracing Christianity, viii. 207. *et seq.*
- Volcanoes* of the Sandwich Islands, described, viii. 108, *et seq.*—anecdote of Kapiolani, viii. 110
- Volition*, not the result of organization, ix. 471
- Volney*, M., the absurd principle of his "Ruins of Empires," viii. 14—his ridiculous theory exploded, viii. 15, *et seq.*
- Voltaire*, like the ancient infidels, despised the poor, ii. 330—quoted, on the doctrine of miracles, ix. 103—his objection, that some prophecies of Scripture have failed, refuted, ix. 273, *et seq.*—his moral character, ix. 312—an objection of, to the Mosaic account of creation, noticed, ix. 347
- Voluntary*, a characteristic of the sacrifice of Christ, viii. 543
- Voluntas beneplaciti*, explained, xi. 301  
——— *signi*, explained, xi. 301
- W.
- Wake*, Archbishop, on the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, v. 402
- Wakefield*, Gilbert, Esq., on the title of Christ, "God blessed for ever," x. 215
- Waldenses*. See *Vaudois* and *Piedmont*.
- Wall*, William, D.D., on the baptism of Jewish proselytes, referred to, x. 368—on the ancient form of baptism, x. 370—on the custom of baptizing naked, xii. 271
- Walls*, of the church of God, noticed, iii. 286
- Walsh*, Rev. Thomas, his literary and religious character, v. 227
- War*, evils of, in the destruction of human life, ii. 22; vi. 365—and eternal loss of souls, ii. 23—its injurious effects upon human character, ii. 23—embitters national animosities, ii. 24—the moral lesson which is taught by war, ii. 27—cause of the war with France, considered, vi. 366, *et seq.*—effects of Christianity on the system of, ix. 323
- Warburton*, Bishop, on hieroglyphical writing, viii. 161—his theory on the origin of letters, viii. 169, *et seq.*—his account of Zoroaster and the Zend, alluded to, ix. 53—on the opinions of the ancients, concerning the soul, ix. 68, *et seq.*—on the heathen mysteries, ix. 92—on the ground of moral obligation, ix. 94—on the significant actions of the Jewish Prophets, ix. 280
- Ward*, Rev. William, of Serampore, his testimony to the state of the Heathen, i. 331—his death, i. 369—his "History of the Hindoos," quoted, on the coincidence of the Hindoo and Greek philosophy, ix. 59—on the theology of the Hindoos, ix. 63—on the Hindoo notion of absorption, ix. 70—on the prevalence of human sacrifice, ix. 83
- Wardlaw*, Ralph, D.D., his remarks on the title of Christ, "God blessed for ever," alluded to, x. 217
- Warfare of the Christian*, armour of light described, iv. 432—438—the spiritual character it sustains, iv. 442—errors of men respecting it, iv. 443—the offensive part of the warfare, examined, iv. 443
- Washing the feet*, lesson taught by Christ in this act, iii. 107
- Watch*, mechanism of a, an illustration of design in the works of God, ix. 422, *et seq.*

*Watch-nights*, ignorantly censured by Mr. Southey, v. 485—his affected anxiety concerning the morality of the Methodists, v. 491—their use proper and edifying, v. 492

*Water*, an instrument of purification under the law, iii. 377, 396—conjectures respecting the quantity of, in the ocean, ix. 352

*Waterland*, Daniel, D.D., on the word "Person," x. 112—on the unity of the three Persons in the Godhead, x. 114—on the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity, x. 117—on a denial of the Trinity being derogatory to the love of Christ, x. 123; and destructive of the Christian scheme, x. 124—on the relation of the Trinity, with the frame and texture of Christianity, x. 132—on the term "Jehovah" applied to Christ, x. 196—his reply to the Arian view of the title of "God" applied to Christ, x. 198—on the phrase, "the only begotten of the Father," as implying divinity, x. 240—on the attributes of Christ, x. 302—on the sole object of divine worship, x. 330—on the notion of a *superior* and *inferior* worship, x. 332—his character as the opponent of Dr. S. Clarke, noticed, x. 357

*Watson*, Bishop, refutation of Hume on miracles, ix. 112—on the oracles of Heathenism, ix. 241—on the objections made to the evidence of prophecy, ix. 268—his defence of the character of Jeremiah referred to, ix. 272, 275; of Isaiah, ix. 274; and of Ezekiel, ix. 277, *et seq.*

—, Rev. Richard, his parentage, i. 1—birth and delicate state of health, i. 2—his education, i. 3—favoured with early religious instruction, i. 4, 5—fraternal conduct of, to his sisters,

i. 5—removes from Barton to Lincoln, i. 6—progress of his education in that city, i. 6, 7—proposal that he should enter the army, i. 8—stratagem to gratify his love of reading, i. 9—his father joins the Methodist society, i. 9—is apprenticed to a joiner, his reasons for choosing this occupation, i. 9—his personal appearance at this time, i. 10—his moral character, i. 10—his conversion, i. 11–13—joins the Methodist society, i. 15—his diligent attendance on the means of grace, i. 16—development of his mental character, i. 17—death of his grandmother, i. 18, 19—commencement of his ministry, i. 19, 20—deplorable state of the villages in the neighbourhood of Lincoln, i. 20—meets with opposition in his labours as a Local Preacher, i. 21—is refused a license to preach by the bench of Magistrates at the Quarter Sessions, i. 21, 22—visits Newark, i. 22—obtains freedom from his apprenticeship, i. 23, 24—supplies the place of the Rev. T. Cooper in the Newark Circuit, i. 24—parental conduct of Mr. Cooper, i. 25—appointed by the Conference to Ashby-de-la-Zouch, i. 26—reason of his name not appearing on the printed Minutes of that year, i. 27—testimonies to his character and usefulness, i. 25–30—desultory character of his studies at this period, i. 30, 31—appointed to the Castle Donnington Circuit, i. 32—inconveniences arising from an immoderate attachment to Henry's "Method for Prayer," i. 32—character and tendency of Winchesterianism, i. 33—appointment to the Leicester Circuit, i. 35—his method of study, i. 36–38—subject of strong temptation in his pulpit



exercises, i. 39—his poetic genius, i. 40, 41—is appointed to Derby, i. 41—the success of his ministry in that town, i. 42—his first publication in answer to an illiberal pamphlet, entitled “An Address to the people called Methodists,” i. 43—disputes in the Methodist societies, i. 44—his character and labours in the Derby Circuit, i. 45—is received into full connexion with the Conference, i. 45—is appointed to Hinckley, i. 45—commences reading Hebrew, i. 46—remarks on his theological studies, i. 47—his indiscretion, falls under the suspicion of heresy, is unkindly treated, and withdraws from the work of an Itinerant Preacher, i. 48, 49—testimonies that he did not hold the tenets ascribed to him, i. 49–51—animadversions on his conduct, i. 51–55—his divine call to the ministry noticed, i. 54—enters into business, marries, and becomes a private member of the Methodist New Connexion, i. 56—re-commences his ministry in that body, and is appointed to the Manchester Circuit, i. 57, 58—his satire upon the immoderate use of instrumental music in places of worship, i. 59, 60—approves of the discipline of the New Connexion, i. 60—his “Memoirs of William Bradbury and John Cash,” noticed, i. 60–62—is made Assistant Secretary to the Conference, i. 62—his sermon on Religious Meditation and Sunday-Schools, i. 63—his letters to the Rev. Jonathan Edmondson, i. 64, 195—his zeal and labours, i. 65—is appointed to the Liverpool Circuit, i. 65—letters to the Messrs. Faulkner, i. 66–76, 84, 93—his verses on charity, i. 77, 78—finishes the period

of his probation as a Minister in the New Connexion, i. 78—writes the Annual Pastoral Address to the Societies, i. 78, 79—is re-appointed to Liverpool, i. 79—writes a History of that town and of the reign of George III., i. 79, 80—commences the Liverpool Courier, i. 81—his political sentiments, i. 82, 83—writes the Address to the Societies in 1808, i. 85—is appointed a third year to Liverpool, i. 86—character and success of his preaching, i. 87—publishes an answer to Mr. Roscoe, i. 87–90—remarks on Christian Ministers engaging in political discussion, i. 91, 92—declining state of his health, i. 93—returned to Liverpool as a Supernumerary, i. 93—writes verses entitled “Enjoyments,” i. 95—compiles a Memoir of the Rev. James Parry, i. 96—his views of church government, i. 97—providential escape, i. 98—is appointed to the Manchester Circuit, i. 99—character and success of his ministry at this period, i. 99, 100—his attachment to the civil and religious liberty of the subject, i. 100—commencement of his acquaintance with the Rev. Dr. Bunting, i. 101—publishes a letter on Lord Sidmouth’s Bill, character of that measure, i. 101–106—failure of his health, retires from the Methodist New Connexion, resides at Liverpool, and becomes a private member of society in the Wesleyan Connexion, i. 107—his conduct in this affair vindicated, i. 108, 109—letters to Mr. A. Watkin, i. 110, 111, 127, 130, 153, &c.—resumes his ministry among the Wesleyan Methodists, i. 115–117—is appointed to the Wakefield Circuit, i. 117—character of his preaching, i. 118—assists at the re-opening of the

Methodist chapel in Halifax, i. 118-120—letter to his dying father, i. 121—letters to Mr. Makinson, i. 123, 125, 153, 155—preaches at the opening of a new chapel at Armley, i. 125—account of Matthew Shackleton, i. 126—departure of Dr. Coke for India, i. 134, 135—formation of a Methodist Missionary Society in Leeds, i. 136—his sermon on that occasion, i. 136-139—writes an Address in behalf of the Methodist Missions, i. 140—his speech at a Missionary Meeting at Halifax, i. 142-146—assists in forming a Missionary Society at Hull and Sheffield, i. 146, 147—his speech at a Meeting in Wakefield, i. 149-153—his sermon on the restoration of peace to Europe, i. 159-162—his zeal in the Missionary cause, i. 163—his conduct in the Wakefield Circuit, i. 166, 167—reproves an impatient hearer, i. 168—is appointed to the Hull Circuit, i. 168—preaches at the opening of a new chapel in Hull, i. 169—character and usefulness of his ministry while in this town, i. 170-172—his views of congregational singing, i. 172—his letters to Mr. Walton, i. 172, 174, 179, 243, 298, 333, 335—is reported to have been robbed, i. 175—preaches at the re-opening of the Methodist chapel in Newark, i. 176—is basely attacked by an anonymous scribbler in one of the Hull newspapers, i. 177; Mr. Watson's reply, i. 177, 178—his conduct as a colleague, i. 180—his providential deliverance, i. 181—visits London to assist at a Missionary Anniversary, i. 182—his sermon in the City-road chapel, i. 183-187—his speech at the public Meeting in City-road, i. 188—prepares a Report for the Auxiliary Missionary Society of

the Hull District, i. 189—difficulty in preparing for the pulpit, i. 191-193—is appointed to the London East Circuit, and Secretary to the Methodist Missions, i. 193—manner in which he discharged his official duties, i. 193-195—his letters to W. C. Ellis, Esq., i. 195, 219, 355, 359, 364, 428, 438—his letters to Mr. Garbutt, i. 196, 199, 291, 407—writes the General Report of the Methodist Missionary Society, i. 199-206—publishes a Defence of the Missions in the West Indies, i. 209-214—character of this publication, i. 210—his speech at the British and Foreign Bible Society, i. 215—receives the thanks of the Conference for his defence of the Missions, i. 218—is re-appointed to the London East Circuit, i. 219—preaching at the opening of the Great Queen-street chapel, London, i. 219—prepares the Missionary Report for 1817, i. 220-225—preaches at the opening of the new chapel in Oxford, i. 226—writes on the eternal sonship of Christ, i. 228-242—his motives for entering upon this discussion, i. 230, 231—character of this production, i. 237—comparisons between Dr. Clarke and Mr. Watson invidious and absurd, i. 238—an unkind reply to this pamphlet, noticed, i. 240, 241—draws up a plan of a general Wesleyan Missionary Society, i. 242—appointed Secretary to the General Chapel-fund, i. 246—is removed by the Conference of 1818 to the London West Circuit, i. 246—preaches before the members of the Sunday-School Union, i. 247—attends an ordination of Missionaries in Bristol, i. 250—delivers an address at the ordination of a number of Missionaries in the City-road cha-

pel, London, i. 253—his views of the Missionary character and work, i. 253-263—writes the Missionary Report for 1818, i. 264-266—his loyal and patriotic exertions during the unsettled state of the nation, 1819, i. 266—his letter to Miss M. Smith, i. 267—undertakes a tour on behalf of the exhausted Missionary fund, i. 270—his speech at the Annual Meeting of the Missionary Society, i. 271—is requested by the Conference to write the first Annual Pastoral Address to the Societies, i. 272-274—draws up a body of instructions to the Methodist Missionaries, i. 275-282—writes the first Report of the General Chapel-fund, i. 283-287—writes the Missionary Report for 1819, i. 288—visits Cornwall, i. 292—addresses the Meeting at the Missionary Anniversary, 1820, i. 296—attends the Conference of 1820, i. 299—writes the Conference Address to the Methodist Episcopal Church of America, i. 300; and the Pastoral Address to the Societies, i. 301—important character of his Missionary correspondence, i. 307—his letter to Rev. W. Goy, i. 308—publishes "Observations on Southey's Life of Wesley," i. 318—character of that work, i. 319—his attachment to the Liturgy of the Church of England, i. 319—his esteem for the late Mr. Benson, i. 324—writes the Missionary Report for 1820, i. 325—his regard for the character of the Rev. W. Ward, of Serampore, i. 331—remarks on Anniversary services, i. 332—attends the Conference of 1821, i. 335—appointed a resident Secretary of the Missions, i. 336—writes the Pastoral Address of the Conference, i. 337—meets in class with Mr. W. Turnell, i. 338—his letter to the Rev. R.

Young, of Jamaica, i. 339—his efficient assistance to the Editor of the Methodist Magazine, i. 341—commences writing his "Theological Institutes," i. 342—writes the Missionary Report for 1821, i. 343—his visit to Cornwall, i. 349—his spirit at Missionary Anniversaries, i. 351—character of his instructions to Missionaries, i. 354—his letter to the Rev. E. Hoole, of Madras, i. 357—precarious state of his health sends him to Brighton, i. 358—writes the Missionary Report of 1822, i. 358—appearance of the first part of his "Institutes," i. 359; character of the work, i. 360-362—his account of the Missionary Anniversary of 1823, i. 363—attends the Sheffield Conference, i. 364—melancholy accident by the overturning of a coach, i. 365—letter to Mr. Walton on the decease of a daughter, i. 366—his reflections on the death of the Rev. W. Ward, of Serampore, i. 369—is interested in the establishment of a Methodist Mission in Jerusalem, i. 370; his letter to Dr. M'Allum on that subject, i. 370—writes in the Magazine on the witness of the Spirit, i. 372—his sermon on "Man magnified by the divine Regard," i. 374—his opinion respecting the introduction of organs into Methodist chapels, i. 375—publishes the second part of the "Institutes," i. 377—his views of the *à priori* argument in proof of a First Cause, i. 379—his conscientious deference to the Scriptures, in his writings, i. 381—writes the Missionary Report of 1823, i. 382—compiles a Catechism of the Evidences of Christianity and the Truth of the holy Scriptures, i. 386—preaches before the Missionary Society, "on the religious In-

struction of the Slaves," i. 389—character of that discourse, i. 389—revisits Oxford, i. 392—attends the Conference of 1824, i. 393—preaches in the open air, i. 394—his opinion of the Anti-Slavery Society, i. 397—his letter to the Colonial Secretaries, on the resolutions of certain Missionaries in Jamaica, i. 399—writes to Mr. Hoole and another, Missionaries in the East Indies, i. 400—writes the Missionary Report of 1824, i. 402—precarious state of his health in 1825, i. 405—his account of the debate in the House of Commons, on the persecution at Barbadoes, i. 409—attends the Conference of 1825, i. 411—singular impression on his mind when at Marlborough, i. 411—writes the Pastoral Address of the Conference of 1825, i. 412—publishes the third part of the "Institutes," i. 414—character of this part, i. 415—his appeals for pecuniary help on behalf of the Missions, i. 418—writes the Missionary Report of 1825, i. 422—publishes "The Labyrinth, or Popish Circle," from the Latin of Episcopus, i. 424; character of the tract, i. 425—his remarks on the melancholy loss of several Missionaries and their families in the "Maria" mail-boat, i. 427—delivers a funeral oration on the death of Joseph Butterworth, Esq., M.P., i. 430—his high regard for the character of the British Senate, i. 431—is elected President of the Liverpool Conference, 1826, i. 433—character of his sermon before the Conference, i. 435—his conduct as President, i. 436—his laconic note to a young Preacher, i. 437—opens a new chapel in the Salford Circuit, i. 438—publishes the fourth part of his "Institutes," i. 439—writes the Missionary

Report for 1826, i. 441—445—assists in preparing a plan for the more efficient management of Methodist Sunday-schools, i. 445—his visit to Scotland, i. 446—attends the Irish Conference, 1827, i. 448; and the British Conference at Manchester, i. 449—his ordination charge, i. 450; ii. 159—his opinion on the best mode of preaching, i. 451—is appointed to the Manchester South Circuit, i. 453—his mode of pulpit preparation while there, i. 455; and character of his ministry, i. 456—his fidelity as a Christian Pastor, i. 457—459—writes the Missionary Report of 1827, i. 460—attends the Missionary Anniversary of 1828, i. 463—publishes the fifth part of his "Institutes," i. 465—his views of the Calvinistic theory, i. 466—the principle which he follows in discussing the Calvinian controversy, i. 468—his views of the doctrine of Christian perfection, i. 470—attends the London Conference of 1828, i. 470—dissensions in the Methodist society in Leeds, i. 471—his *exposé* of the injurious principles of the dissentients, in an Affectionate Address, i. 473; character of the pamphlet, i. 475—his letter in defence of his personal character, i. 479—dishonourable conduct of his opponents, i. 480—publishes the sixth part of his "Institutes," i. 483; character of this work as a whole, i. 484—attends the Conference of 1829, preaches before it, and is appointed to London North Circuit, i. 485—writes a characteristic sketch of Thomas Thompson, Esq., of Hull, i. 485—the spirit in which he entered upon the duties of his new Circuit, i. 488—his letter to the Rev. John Hannah, on the death of his child, i. 489

—writes the *Missionary Report* of 1829, i. 490—publishes “*Conversations for the Young*,” i. 494; character of the work, i. 495—his speech at the *Missionary Anniversary* of 1830, i. 495–506—his letter to the late Rev. Samuel Entwisle, of Bath, i. 506—his efforts in advancing the objects of the *Anti-Slavery Society*, i. 509—his interview with H. Brougham, Esq., (now Lord Brougham,) at Leeds, i. 510—is requested to write a *Life of Mr. Wesley*, i. 513—his view of the character of Mr. Wesley, i. 513—is re-appointed to the *London North Circuit*, i. 514—invited to fill the chair of Professor of Belles Lettres and Moral Philosophy in the *American Wesleyan University*, i. 514; his reply to that invitation, i. 515—his address in *City-road chapel*, on negro slavery, i. 516–524—his speech at a Meeting of the *Anti-Slavery Society*, i. 526–532—his appeal to the electors, members of the *Methodist society*, at a general election, on the subject of slavery, i. 533—assists in the preparation of a *Supplement to the Methodist Hymn-book*, i. 536—publishes his “*Life of the Rev. John Wesley*,” i. 537; character of the work, i. 538—compiles a “*Biblical and Theological Dictionary*,” i. 540—presented with the thanks of the Conference for his “*Life of Wesley*,” i. 541—attends the *Conference* of 1831, i. 541—his proceedings at the fast-day observed by the *City-road congregation*, on the appearance of the cholera, i. 543; and at the ensuing watch-night, i. 545—letter to a friend, i. 546—precarious state of his health, i. 548—writes the *Missionary Report* of 1831, i. 548—his feelings in regard to certain revolutionary pro-

ceedings in Jamaica, i. 552—visits Brighton for the benefit of his health, i. 553—character of his “*Theological Dictionary*,” i. 553—defended against a charge of heterodoxy, i. 554—his speech at the *Missionary Anniversary* of 1831, i. 555—his antipathy to writing sermons for publication, i. 562—contemplates publishing an *Exposition of the New Testament*, i. 562—attends the *Conference* of 1832, in Liverpool, i. 563—takes a prominent part in the meetings for intercession, on account of the prevalence of the cholera, i. 563—notice of his sermon preached before the *Conference*, i. 564—re-appointed to the office of resident Secretary of the *Missions*, executes a deed conveying the copyright of certain of his works to the *Connexion*, and draws up the *Resolutions of Conference*, deprecatory of colonial slavery, i. 566—his affecting resignation of the pastoral charge of the *London North Circuit*, i. 569—the interest with which he entered on the labours of *Missionary Secretary*, i. 571—his letter to *Missionaries*, i. 571–579—his feelings on the death of the Rev. Dr. Clarke, and the Rev. Thomas Stanley, i. 580—his remarks on the doctrine of *Christian perfection*, i. 581—preaches his last sermon in *Hinde-street chapel*, London, i. 582; sketch of this discourse, i. 582—death of the Rev. John James, his co-Secretary, i. 586—compelled by increasing debility to relinquish his expository labours, i. 588—his letter to T. F. Buxton, Esq., on the subject of negro emancipation, i. 590–597—his feelings on the prospect of liberty being granted to the slave, i. 597—his increasing illness and death, i.

- 599-614—Mr. Dixon's account of his later moments, i. 614-618—Resolutions of the Missionary Committee on his lamented dissolution, i. 619—his funeral, i. 620—Dr. Bunting's sermon on occasion of his death, i. 621—characteristic sketch of Mr. Watson published by the Missionary Committee and the Conference, i. 622-628—character of his "Exposition of the New Testament," i. 628—his personal appearance and mental character, i. 630-634—versatility of his talents, i. 634—his industry and diligence in pastoral duties, i. 635-639—his affectionate regard for children, i. 641—effect of disease upon his spirits, i. 642—his domestic character, i. 643—qualifications for the office of Missionary Secretary, i. 645—his catholic spirit, i. 647—his powers of conversation, i. 649—his exemplary submission to the authority of Scripture, i. 651—his letter to a speculatist, i. 654—his manner and conduct in the pulpit, i. 655-659—his conduct as a Methodist Preacher, i. 661—was not a theoretic Dissenter, i. 663—his regard for the established Church, i. 663—his deep piety, i. 664
- Watts*, Dr. I., his treatise on the glorified humanity of Christ, censured, i. 47—a comparative estimate of his hymns, v. 297—his excellencies as an hymnologist, v. 299—his "Philosophical Essays" referred to, ix. 510—on the original state of man, x. 395, 396—on the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, in answer to Dr. Taylor, x. 447
- Way to God*, how laid open through a Mediator, vi. 355
- Weak brethren*, mentioned by Paul, who they were, vi. 265
- Wedding garment*, why the want of, precluded a man from the feast, vi. 206
- Wednesbury*, diabolical conduct of a Clergyman of, v. 111—violent persecution of Mr. Wesley and the early Methodists in that town, v. 112-116—disgraceful proceedings of the Magistrates of, v. 113—protracted duration of the persecution in that town, v. 117—persecution of Mr. Charles Wesley there, v. 125
- Weeks*, division of time into, viii. 145, 146; xii. 93—a proof of the antiquity of the institution of the Sabbath, xii. 93
- Welch*, Mr. Charles, his "Investigation of Mark Robinson's Observations," &c., reviewed, vii. 129, *et seq.*—an error into which he has fallen, vii. 160
- Wesley*, Rev. Charles, his parentage, v. 1—his early life and religious impressions, v. 10—his Christian profession in Oxford, v. 13—Mr. Gambold's description of, v. 27-30—accompanies his brother to Georgia, v. 32—safe arrival, and takes the charge of Frederica, v. 35—his ill-treatment there, returns to England, v. 36—obtains justification through faith in Christ, v. 54—interview with the Archbishop of Canterbury, v. 71—commences field-preaching, v. 71—preaches the doctrine of justification by faith before the University, v. 71—effects which followed the preaching of the truth, v. 72—his account of a riot at Kingswood, v. 76—visits Staffordshire, Birmingham, and Sheffield, v. 107—severe persecution at Sheffield, v. 107-109—visits Leeds and Newcastle, v. 109, 110—description of his brother John, after the Wednesbury persecution, v. 115—visits Wednesbury, v. 116; his persecution there, v. 125—visits the north of England, v. 126—preaches

- at Devizes, v. 127; his severe persecution there, v. 128-132—visits Dublin, where he encounters a Popish mob, v. 154—his marriage, v. 195—his account of the earthquake in London, v. 196—his attachment to the Church of England, v. 198—is dissatisfied with the want of attachment of the Preachers to the Church, v. 199—dissensions between, and his brother John, v. 199-201—proceeding of, respecting his brother's attachment to Grace Murray, v. 200—anecdote of, v. 201—visits the societies during the illness of his brother, v. 212—his lines on the re-publication of Hervey's Letters, v. 215—his epitaph on Mr. Hervey, v. 216—his conduct in the Bath dispute, v. 249—his view of the conduct of his brother in appointing Superintendents for the American societies, v. 264-266—Dr. Whitehead's account of the death of, v. 294—his character, v. 295—Miss Wesley's remarks on her father's character, v. 295 (n)—the exalted merit of his hymns, v. 297—his excellencies as an hymnologist, v. 299—a voluminous writer of sacred poetry, v. 302—an erroneous idea respecting his opinion of band-meetings, corrected, v. 490—is defended by Miss Wesley from various imputations cast upon his character by Southey, v. 491 (n)—his character as a Preacher, vii. 411—contrasted with Mr. John Wesley, vii. 429—his latter days alluded to, vii. 429—powerful eulogium on his hymns, vii. 430
- Wesley*, Rev. John, a letter of, to the Rev. Joseph Benson, quoted, i. 47—his description of true religion, i. 311-315; his diligence in the search of it, i. 315—Southey's Life of, noticed, i. 318—is defended from the charge of ambition, i. 322—his life compiled by Mr. Watson, i. 537—description of Mr. Wesley in old age, i. 539—was peculiarly adapted for the work to which he was called, ii. 447—parentage of, v. 1—advantages of his religious education, v. 3—escape from fire, is sent to the Charterhouse, and then to Christ-Church, Oxford, v. 4—religious impressions, v. 5—his reading, v. 6—his early doctrinal views, v. 7-9—is ordained, elected Fellow of Lincoln-College, Oxford, v. 9—obtains Priest's orders, v. 10—his Christian profession in Oxford, v. 13—his search for peace with God, v. 14—visits the gaol in Oxford, v. 16—encouraged by his father, v. 17—his own description of his spiritual state, v. 20-22—visits London and Epworth, v. 23—declining health of his father, v. 23—his reasons for refusing the rectory of Epworth, v. 24—accepts the offer of a mission to Georgia, v. 26—Mr. Gambold's description of, v. 27-30—his motives for going to Georgia, v. 32; proceedings during the voyage, v. 34—takes the charge of Savannah, v. 35—his advantages from intercourse with the Moravians, v. 37—his affair with Miss Hopkey, considered at large, v. 37-43—departs from Georgia for England, v. 44—his review of his religious experience, v. 45—derives permanent benefit from Peter Böhler, v. 50—obtains justification, by faith through Jesus Christ, v. 53—visits the Moravian settlement in Germany, v. 64—character of his ministry on his return, v. 67—manner of occupying his time, v. 69—visits Bristol, v. 73—effects of his labours at Kings-

wood, v. 75-77—visits Bath, v. 78—preaches on Kennington-common and in Wales, v. 79—his statement of his doctrinal views, v. 80—separates from the Moravians, v. 82; reasons for so doing, v. 83—collects the original Methodist society, v. 84—extraordinary effects produced by his preaching, v. 86—correspondence with his brother Samuel respecting them, and on the doctrine of assurance, v. 86, 87—defended from the charge of enthusiasm, v. 89—his rupture and subsequent reconciliation with Mr. Whitefield, v. 94—preaches Mr. Whitefield's funeral sermon, v. 94—employs lay Preachers, v. 95; his reasons for so doing, v. 95, 96—ecclesiastical irregularity of, considered, v. 96-99—defended from the charge of having formed a plan of separation, v. 99—meets with persecution in London, v. 100—divides the society into classes, v. 101—is charged with being a Papist, v. 102—visits the northern counties of England, v. 102, *et seq.*—visits Epworth, v. 104—his remarks on a sermon on justification, v. 105—returns to London to witness the death of his mother, v. 106—appoints visitors of the sick, v. 110—object of a visit to Wednesbury, v. 111—his persecution in that town, v. 112-116; reflections upon that event, v. 114—his first visit to Cornwall, v. 116—preaches his last sermon before the University of Oxford, v. 118—corresponds with the Rev. James Erskine, v. 118—extract from his sermon on a Catholic Spirit, v. 119-121—his first Conference held in London, v. 122—his letter to Robert Young, v. 137—his statement of the case between the Clergy and

himself, v. 137-139—his desire for the co-operation of the Clergy, disappointed, v. 140—visits the northern counties of England again, v. 141—gives his testimony against Quakerism, Antinomianism, and Calvinism, v. 141—visits Newcastle at the approach of the Pretender, v. 142—prints and distributes an immense number of religious tracts, v. 143—reads Lord King's account of the primitive church, v. 143—confers on the subject of church government, v. 144—his strict attention to discipline, v. 149—his interview with certain pretended Prophets, v. 149—visits Dr. Dodd, under sentence of death, v. 150—visits Devonshire and Cornwall, v. 150—his anxiety to advance the cause of learning, v. 151—preaches in Manchester, v. 151—encounters a rude mob at Plymouth, v. 152—enforces the discipline of the society in Cornwall, v. 153—visits Ireland for the first time, v. 153—doctrinal views of, recorded in the Minutes of Conference, illustrated, v. 158-185—his intense search after truth, v. 185—extract from the preface to his sermons, v. 185 (n)—his desire for a “seminary for labourers,” v. 187—views of a call to the ministry, v. 187—his brief and pointed style, manifested in his notices of the deaths of Preachers, v. 190-192—his admirable superintendence of the societies, v. 192-194—exercises discipline on one of his Preachers, v. 198—institutes an investigation into the character of all his Preachers, v. 198, 199—cause of dissension with his brother Charles, v. 199-200—his attachment to, and disappointment respecting, Grace Murray, v. 200—sympathy of



the Rev. V Perronet with, v. 200—marries Mrs. Vizelle, v. 201; her character, v. 202—his magnanimous conduct during his persecutions from his wife, v. 203, 204—establishes Kingswood School, v. 205; objects which he contemplated in so doing, v. 205—visits Scotland, v. 206—his acquaintance with Dr. Gillies, v. 207—his meekness in receiving reproof, exemplified, v. 208, 209—is threatened with consumption, v. 209—writes his own epitaph, v. 210—commences his Notes on the New Testament, v. 211—considers the question of separation from the Church at the Leeds Conference, v. 212—his Address to the Clergy, v. 213—provides for the continuance of the Connexion after his death, v. 214—prejudice against him on the republication of Hervey's Letters, v. 214—receives the freedom of the city of Perth, v. 216—fate of his Address to the American Colonies, v. 217—his characteristic notices of books, v. 222—defence of the power exercised over his societies, v. 225—his anxiety to preserve his people from Antinomianism, v. 229—on the salvability of the Heathen, v. 232—the Calvinistic controversy, narrated, v. 235–240—his reply to the Rev. R. Hill, v. 241—benefits of the controversy, v. 243—Rev. Thomas Jackson's elegant edition of the Works of, v. 243—his concern for the welfare of the Connexion after his death, v. 244—his sickness in Ireland, v. 246—his correspondence with the Commissioners of Excise, vi. 247—visits the Isle of Man, v. 247—erection of the new chapel, City-road, London, v. 248—publishes the Arminian Magazine, v. 249—his dispute at Bath, on the ap-

pointment of a Clergyman, v. 249—his letter to a Nobleman, v. 251—visit to Holland, v. 252–257—executes the Deed of Declaration, v. 258—his letter to the American societies, v. 263—appoints Superintendents and Elders, v. 263; apparent irregularity of this proceeding, v. 264; his defence of this measure, v. 265—appoints Preachers for Scotland by imposition of hands, v. 268; reasons for so doing, v. 269—employs lay Preachers to assist in administering the sacrament, v. 271—remarks on his ordinations, v. 272—journey to Ireland, v. 275—visits the Norman Isles, v. 280—remarks on his proceedings, having attained his eighty-fifth year, v. 286—views of, entertained by the Clergy, v. 287—Bishop Copleston's estimate of the labours of, v. 288—his grateful recognition of the success of his labours, v. 290—his reflections on reaching the eighty-fifth anniversary of his birth-day, v. 292—death of his brother Charles, v. 294—his eulogy upon his brother's hymns, v. 300, 305—his strength declines, v. 305—his last visit to the north of England, v. 306—account of his last days, death, and funeral, v. 308–314—his funeral discourse by Dr. Whitehead, v. 315—inscription on the tablet erected to his memory, v. 315, 316—summary of his character, by Dr. Whitehead, v. 316–323; by an anonymous hand, 323–325; by Alexander Knox, v. 325; and by a writer in "Woodfall's Diary," v. 326, *et seq.*—a description of his person, v. 329—reasons why full justice has not been done to his labours, v. 331—his objections to a separation from the Church in the early part of his career, noticed, v. 332—

remarks on his alleged love of power, v. 344; and on his supposed credulity, v. 345, 501—his voluminous writings, v. 346—the interest he took in the abolition of the slave-trade, v. 347—account of his conversion, v. 359–363; theological points included therein, v. 363; Southey's flippant observations upon them, v. 364, *et seq.*—his providential call to the Christian ministry, denied by Southey, v. 376—his great success in the work strangely accounted for, v. 377—his work and success defended, v. 379–384—his definition of the doctrine of assurance, v. 398; his views of, which he taught, defended, v. 408–410—defended from the charge of boasting, v. 426—his own view of the effects produced by his preaching, v. 427—the effects of his preaching not new or peculiar, v. 432—extract from his sermon “on Enthusiasm,” v. 441—a review of his itinerant career, v. 449, *et seq.*—principles by which he was actuated, v. 452—tendency of his proceedings to promote separation from the Church, considered, v. 456—powerful reasons why he was anxious not to form a sect, v. 462—his efforts to ameliorate the state of the nation, v. 464, *et seq.*—Hampson's contrast of, with Whitefield, v. 475—Southey mistaken in the cause of his separation from Whitefield, v. 493—defended against Mr. Southey's charge of ambition, spiritual pride, and love of power, v. 504–512; and against an attack in the Monthly Magazine, v. 509–511—great contrast between the character of Mr. Wesley and Mr. Robert Southey, v. 513—provided for the administration of the Lord's supper to his societies, vii. 140—remarks on the

several biographies of him, vii. 408—moral influence of his labours on the nation, vii. 414, *et seq.*—the striking peculiarity of his doctrines, vii. 419, *et seq.*—character of the Arminianism of, vii. 420, *et seq.*—his alleged inconsistency with the Church of England, considered, vii. 423, *et seq.*—his letter to W. Wilberforce, Esq., M.P., on negro slavery, vii. 436—Mr. Moore's remarks on his “Notes on the New Testament,” vii. 437—his correspondence with John Smith, supposed to be Archbishop Secker, vii. 440—his tracts against the Church of Rome, vii. 451—the great reviver of the leading principles of Arminianism, vii. 475—an interesting parallel between him and Arminius, vii. 475, *et seq.*—visited with slanders similar to those of Arminius, vii. 490—defence of his sermon on the witness of the Spirit, viii. 252, *et seq.*—on congregational singing, viii. 323—quoted on the morality of Christianity, ix. 316—his reply to Middleton's “Free Inquiry,” ix. 322—on the passions attributed to the Deity, x. 31, *et seq.*—on the wisdom displayed in the moral government of God, x. 56—on the origin of moral evil, x. 83—on the law and will of God, x. 380—his definition of the term “law,” x. 385—his refutation of the arguments of Dr. Taylor on the original state of man, x. 397; and on the penalty of death, due to Adam's transgression, x. 443—on the imputation of Adam's sin, x. 449—on the distinction between justification and sanctification, xi. 177—how far the doctrine of imputed righteousness is admitted by, xi. 178–189—his revival of an evangelical Arminianism, xi. 221—on the doctrine of justification

- by faith, xi. 221—on the connexion of repentance with justification, xi. 232—on the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, xi. 255—on the witness of our own spirit, xi. 271—on the sovereignty of God, xi. 490—and on the case of the Heathen, xi. 493
- Wesley*, Rev. Samuel, Rector of Epworth, character of the, v. 1, 2; vii. 413—encourages the pious exertions of his sons in Oxford, v. 16—his declining health and death, v. 23–25— anecdote of, v. 26—the religious character of his family, stated, vii. 413
- , Samuel, junior, his character, v. 3—encourages the proceedings of his brothers in Oxford, v. 18—corresponds with his brother John on the doctrine of assurance, v. 86
- , Miss Sarah, her statement of the affair concerning Mr. Wesley and Grace Murray, v. 201—her remarks on the character of her father, v. 295—notice of her death, v. 295 (n)—defends her father's character against certain imputations of Southey, v. 490, 491
- , Mrs. Susanna, character of, v. 2, 3; vii. 413—her obscure views of evangelical religion accounted for, v. 3—superintends the early education of her children, v. 4—her correspondence with her son John, v. 5–9; attends his ministry, v. 85—her religious experience, v. 85—approves of the preaching of Thomas Maxfield, v. 95—her happy death, v. 106
- West*, Gilbert, referred to on the resurrection of Christ, ix. 214
- *Indies*, character of the Methodist Missions in those colonies, i. 328—establishment of Christian Missions in those islands, noticed, vi. 428—opposition excited there to Missionary enterprise, vi. 429—habitual neglect of the Sabbath in the, vi. 459—Missionary stations in, vi. 463—unfriendly character of the climate of, vi. 466—how Missionaries are supported in, vi. 467—success of the Gospel there, vi. 467, 468—influence of Obeahism in those colonies, detailed, vi. 469—persecuting treatment of the Missionaries there, vi. 470, *et seq.*—stratagems of the colonists to impede Missionary enterprise, vi. 486—testimonies of Missionaries that the colonists objected to Christian instruction altogether, vi. 487—general good conduct of Missionaries in those islands, vi. 491, *et seq.*—the conduct of the planters furnishes sufficient refutation of Mr. Marryatt's charges against the West Indian Missionaries, vi. 504, *et seq.*—deteriorating effect of slavery on the West Indian character, vi. 515—laws of toleration recognised in the, as elsewhere, vi. 521
- Whateley*, William, a Puritan Minister of Banbury, character of, v. 197
- Whately*, Archbishop, his notions respecting the criminality of suicide, examined, xii. 117
- Wheels*, Ezekiel's vision of the, iv. 261—indicative of the revolutions of divine Providence, iv. 262—in judgment and mercy, iv. 262—the perplexity attending providential dispensations, iv. 264—are directed by intelligence and wisdom, iv. 267
- Whiston*, William, M. A., his character as an expositor, viii. 72
- Whitaker*, Rev. John, on the pre-existence of Christ to Abraham, x. 158, *et seq.*—on the divinity of the title "Son of God," x. 220—his "Origin of Arianism," quoted, x. 221—on the Logos of Philo, x. 277
- Whitby*, Daniel, D. D., on the title "Great God and our Saviour," applied to Christ, x. 208—on the phrase "God

- blessed for ever," x. 216—on the term "only begotten of the Father," x. 239—on the attributes of Christ, x. 302—on the creative acts of Christ, a proof of divinity, x. 305—his view of the effects of the fall, as stated by Dr. Hill, x. 434; and of the doctrine of justification by faith, noticed, xi. 221—on the import of the term "justifying faith," xi. 227—his theory concerning the faith which justifies, exploded, xi. 238
- White*, Professor, an objectionable sentiment of his, quoted, on Islamism benefiting Christianity, vii. 387
- Whitehead*, John, M.D., his "Life of Mr. John Wesley," noticed, v. 1, 5, 9—his opinion respecting the decline of Mr. Wesley's authority in the Connexion, refuted, v. 250—his account of the death of the Rev. C. Wesley, v. 294—preaches the sermon on the death of Mr. Wesley, v. 315—just character of his biography of the Wesleys, vii. 408
- Whitefield*, Rev. George, member of the first Methodist society, v. 12, 16—urges Rev. C. Wesley to field-preaching, v. 71—defended from the charge of enthusiasm, v. 89—his rupture and subsequent reconciliation with Mr. Wesley, v. 94—extract from the will of, v. 94—his funeral sermon preached by Mr. Wesley, v. 94—affectionate letter of, to Rev. John Wesley, on his illness and anticipated dissolution, v. 210—the effects of his ministry strangely accounted for by Southey, v. 376; who charges him with enthusiasm, v. 386—is defended against the charge, v. 386—the effects of his preaching not new or peculiar, v. 432—principles by which he was actuated, v. 452—Hampson's contrast of, with Wesley, v. 475—Southey mistaken as to the cause of his separation from Wesley, v. 493
- Whitley*, Dr., his "Essays," quoted, on the importance of appeals to Scripture in controversy, xi. 274
- Wicked*, awful condition of the, in eternity, iii. 34; xi. 42—why they know not God, viii. 382
- Wickedness of nations*, extensive and violent, an argument in favour of the doctrine of original sin, x. 457, *et seq.*
- Wilberforce*, William, Esq. M.P., Mr. Wesley's letter to, on negro slavery, vii. 436
- Wilkins*, Bishop, on the unity, ix. 464; omnipotence, ix. 499; and omniscience of God, x. 3
- Wilks*, Rev. S. C., M.A., his "Correlative Claims and Duties," reviewed, viii. 121–132—object of the work, viii. 122—his argument defective, on the lawfulness of church establishments, viii. 124
- Will of God*, how connected with man's salvation, iii. 417—revelation of the, how made, ix. 14—remarks upon the, x. 380—on the notion of a secret and revealed will, xi. 301, *et seq.*
- of man*, a seat of inward religion, iv. 350—how degraded by the Calvinian view of predestination, vii. 244—in what respect it is not an independent principle, vii. 253—the doctrine of human accountability, vii. 254, *et seq.*; xi. 299—and of the freedom of the will, considered, xi. 300, *et seq.*, 478, *et seq.*—that of philosophical necessity, examined, xi. 484, *et seq.*
- Williams*, Edward, D.D., his modified scheme of Calvinism referred to, xi. 459
- Wilson*, William, B.D., his "Illustration of the Method of explaining the New Testament," &c., quoted, vii. 24; x. 246—on the title of "Son of God," implying divinity, x. 246
- Winchesterianism*, character and tendency of, i. 33, 34—res

- lutely opposed by Mr. Watson, in his early ministry, i. 34
- Winterbotham*, Dr., his "Account of the Native Africans," &c., quoted, vi. 432
- Wisdom*, defined, ii. 319—where the Grecians failed in manifesting wisdom, ii. 320—schemes of human, unable to ameliorate the moral condition of man, ii. 487—heavenly wisdom, why termed "a tree of life," iii. 69—of the divine oracles, iv. 46—of the Gentiles, iv. 187—principles of, taught by Christ, elucidated, iv. 187, *et seq.*—of Christ, iv. 450—"wisdom from above," James's description of, vi. 317—maybe amply possessed, and the heart unchanged, vi. 344
- *of God*, why the Gospel is said to be the, ii. 320—is exhibited in the scheme of redemption, ii. 322; x. 56—importance of the revelation of, iv. 230—necessity and advantage of faith in, iv. 230, *et seq.*—manifested in the church and in individuals, iv. 231; and in the world, iv. 232—noticed, ix. 368—definition of the, x. 49—scripture testimonies to, x. 49—displayed in creation, x. 50; by his acting for worthy ends, x. 50; by the simplicity of the divine processes, x. 51; by the variety of perfect operation, x. 52; and in their connexion and dependence, x. 54—is shown in his moral government, x. 55—is impugned by the doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation, xi. 350—cannot be adduced as an argument against the necessity of prayer, xii. 60
- "———," a title of Christ, considered, x. 230—views which the Jews entertained of this phrase," x. 231
- Witch of Endor*, her character, vi. 110
- Witsius*, Herman, D. D., his "Sacred Dissertations on the Apostles' Creed," reviewed, vii. 493–506—his remarks on the antiquity of the form, vii. 496—character of the work, vii. 498—his qualifications to write these dissertations, vii. 498—his confused notions of saving faith, vii. 501—his remarks on the work of the Holy Spirit, vii. 503—obscurity of, in distinguishing between true and inefficacious faith, vii. 504—on the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity, x. 118—on the phrase, "This day have I begotten thee," x. 227, *et seq.*—on the personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit, x. 373
- Witness of the Spirit*, no new doctrine, peculiar to Methodism, i. 372; xi. 268—Mr. Watson's paper in the Magazine on this doctrine, i. 373; viii. 251, *et seq.*—his deep conviction of the importance of this branch of Christian truth, referred to, i. 374—a benefit resulting from the atonement of Christ, i. 439—philosophical views of, ii. 213—scripture sense of the term, ii. 214; xi. 253—the privilege defined, iv. 84—the subject of his testimony, iv. 292—the only competent witness, iv. 293—how the testimony is borne, iv. 294; xi. 260, *et seq.*—is direct in its nature, iv. 295; xi. 264, *et seq.*—errors connected with this doctrine, considered, iv. 296—the objection that there is no certainty of our being *now* in a state of salvation, iv. 296–298—the doctrine of, agreeable to the words of Christ, iv. 298—free from enthusiasm and fanaticism, iv. 299—the notion that it is a privilege belonging only to some eminent Christians, examined, iv. 301; xi. 257—the fact that many discard this truth, iv. 302—the doctrine not connected with an assurance of final salvation, iv. 303—its practical benefits, iv. 303, *et seq.*—Mr. Wesley's early views of, v. 7.—Spangenberg's questions to Mr. Wes-

ley on this doctrine, v. 35—was enjoyed by Dr. Samuel Annesley, v. 85—Mr. Wesley corresponds with his brother Samuel on this subject, v. 86—the doctrine illustrated, v. 171–180; xi. 260—extract from Mr. Wesley's sermon on, v. 171–175; viii. 244; xi. 255—is not the Calvinistic assurance of eternal salvation, v. 175; xi. 254—essential to our consolation and peace, v. 176; xi. 258—consonant with the service of the Church of England, v. 177—testimonies in favour of the doctrine from Bishops Horsley, Hall, and Brownrigg, v. 178, 179, 396 (n); xi. 270—testimony of Calvin, Owen, and Poole, to the precedence of, to the witness of our own spirit, v. 182, 183, 404—a doctrine not rash, inconsiderate, or enthusiastic, v. 183—the doctrine stated, v. 393–395—testimony of Divines of the Church of England in favour of, v. 400–405; xi. 269, *et seq.*—held by the old Divines of the Calvin school, v. 405—necessity and importance of the doctrine, considered, v. 405–408—the doctrine, as held by Mr. Wesley, defended, v. 408–410—testifies to man's justified state, vi. 259—the doctrine, as held by the Methodists, stated, vii. 421, *et seq.*—value of the doctrine, vii. 505—erroneously stated by the Rev. J. W. Cunningham, viii. 241—inconsistency of the Clergy in denying this truth, viii. 242—the Gospel not fully preached when this doctrine is not inculcated, viii. 245—reply to “Euphronius,” viii. 251–257—defence of Mr. Wesley's sermon on this truth, viii. 252, *et seq.*—absurd scheme of those who impugn it, viii. 243, 256—remarks on the supposed abuses of it, viii. 262—close connexion of, with justification, viii. 263—reply to the

queries of “Clericus,” viii. 262, *et seq.*—second reply to “Clericus,” viii. 272–285—objections against the doctrine, examined, viii. 273, *et seq.*—on inferential testimony, viii. 277—four opinions on this subject, alluded to, xi. 255, *et seq.*—sentiments of Mant and D'Oyly, and Thomas Scott, on the doctrine, xi. 256—the opposite doctrine is destitute of comfort, xi. 258; and contrary to Scripture, xi. 259—nature of the testimony, xi. 260—the opinions of Bishop Bull and Thomas Scott, refuted, xi. 261—not to be confounded with the witness of our own spirit, xi. 261—the delusive character of merely inferential testimony, exposed, xi. 262, *et seq.*—the fruits of the Spirit not sufficient evidence of the fact of our adoption, xi. 264, *et seq.*—the testimonies of Luther, Bishops Hooper, Andrews, and the judicious Hooker, in favour of the direct witness, xi. 268, 269; of Usher and Pearson, xi. 270

*Witness of our own spirit*, cannot testify to the fact of our adoption, iv. 293; and why, iv. 293—why conjoined with the testimony of the Spirit of God, iv. 295—the nature of this witness explained, iv. 295, 299; xi. 260, 271—the close connexion of, with the Spirit of God, illustrated, iv. 300—term “inferential testimony,” defined v. 180—proved to be delusive, v. 181—the *indirect* nature of this testimony is posterior to the *direct* testimony of the Spirit of God, v. 180–182—importance of, viii. 275—the two-fold testimony, explained, xi. 261

*Witnesses*, character of the, to the miracles of Christ, ii. 224

*Wives*, how obtained in the east, vi. 69—the relation in which they stand to their husbands, xii. 134—particular duties of, specified, xii. 135—aberrations

- of, from their particular duties, noticed, xii. 136
- Wogan*, William, Esq., on the name "Jehovah," applied to Jesus Christ, x. 179
- Wolff*, Joseph, his account of a sect of Christians in Mesopotamia, xii. 277
- Wolfus*, on the eternity of the Son of God, x. 308
- Wollaston*, William, M.A., his "Religion of Nature delineated," referred to, ix. 390—on the divine unity, ix. 463
- Womack*, Bishop, his "Arcana Dogmatum," quoted, xi. 298, 413, 419
- Woman*, character of, elevated by Christianity, ix. 323
- Woodhouse-Grove School*, object and design of the establishment of, v. 206—want of such a seminary for the sons of Methodists, deplored, v. 206
- Woodward*, Dr., his religious societies, noticed, v. 37 (n), 68 (n)
- Word of God*, the Scriptures, why compared to seed, ii. 368—publication of, secured in Christian worship, iii. 213—a powerful means of resisting temptation, iv. 38—an important gift of the Holy Spirit, iv. 83—why termed "the sword of the Spirit," iv. 436—converting influence of the, iv. 513—the rule of salvation, iii. 170. See *Scriptures*.
- , how he becomes a peculiar victim, ii. 322—why our Lord is so denominated, ii. 432; vi. 203—its personal and official signification, ii. 433—the incarnation of, considered, ii. 434—his eternity and pre-existence, vi. 19—compared to a "two-edged sword," vi. 314—is called "God," in the highest sense, x. 204—frequently used in the Old Testament, as denoting the second Person in the Trinity, x. 268, *et seq.* See *Logos*.
- Wordsworth*, William, D.D., on Granville Sharp's law of criticism, in reference to the Greek article, x. 209—his letters to G. Sharp, referred to, x. 210
- Works*, of salvation, why so considered, iii. 21, 447—piety, viewed as a labour, iii. 29—of God, to make man meet for heaven, iii. 162—works only a condition of salvation, v. 232—not included in the import of the term "justifying faith," xi. 227—in what sense good works are any ground at all of the final sentence of eternal life, xi. 245—Lawson's remarks on the excellency of good works, xi. 246
- *of charity*, how far to be performed on the Sabbath, viii. 154, 155; xii. 101—intimately connected with our duty to our neighbour, xii. 106
- *of Christ*, why the whole are not recorded in Scripture, ii. 235
- *of God*, infinite wisdom conspicuous in the, iii. 300—do not give a sufficient indication of his will to man, ix. 12, 24; or of the duty of man to God, ix. 14, 24—characterized by order and harmony, x. 74
- *of necessity*, how far allowable on the Sabbath, viii. 155, 156
- World*, why emptiness is attached to worldly good, ii. 76—how a just estimate of, may be taken, ii. 263—inhabited or uninhabited worlds, made for the Son, ii. 288—political events of the, advance the scheme of redemption, ii. 298—small portion of, blessed with the word of God, ii. 369—its awful state referred to, ii. 369—a worldly spirit defined, deliverance from, promised, ii. 457—the end of, considered, iii. 26—pleasures of, destitute of comfort, iii. 62—in what respect it is lost to a condemned soul, iii. 221—why Satan is termed "the god of this world," iii. 250—meaning of the term in a spiritual sense, iii. 371—unsanctified

- friendship with, how manifested, iii. 373—loss of, part of the sting of death, iii. 428—the scene of Missionary labours, iii. 457—459—a vain refuge, iv. 31—in what respect under the government of Christ, iv. 137—how it is ruled by the Most High, iv. 145—principles of the government of, taught by Christ, iv. 193—moral state of the, iv. 208—conversion of, not effected without great opposition, iv. 217—the conversion of, the special scheme of the Almighty, iv. 219—how governed by Christ, iv. 246, *et seq.*—“citizenship of the world,” import of the phrase, ii. 24; iv. 340—nature of the invisible world, alluded to, viii. 445—formation of, from chaotic matter, ix. 47—convulsions of, attributable to the moral delinquency of man, x. 72, *et seq.*—the Calvinistic restriction of the term, considered, xi. 279—significations of the term, occasionally given, xi. 281—is never applied to the “elect” in Scripture, xi. 281—the absurdity of restricting the term exhibited, xi. 282; scriptures examined which have been supposed to favour this restriction, xi. 283
- “*World to come*,” meaning of the phrase, vi. 308
- Worldly spirit*, a powerful temptation of Satan, iv. 37—darkens the heart, iv. 140
- Worship*, fallacy of the idea, that the worship of God and that of idols spring from the same principle, ii. 482—of God, is a coming to the altar, iii. 142—true worship implies a recognition of our sin, iii. 142; a liability to punishment, iii. 143; and that God is propitious through an atonement, iii. 143—a source of joy, iii. 145—brings into the presence of God, iii. 145—appropriates God to ourselves, iii. 146—increases our confidence, iii. 146—renews assurances of divine favour, iii. 147; and confirms our hope, iii. 147—one advantage from union with the church, iii. 184—its universality, a proof of its divine authority, iii. 207—nature of true worship, iii. 208—acts of worship, iii. 209—places of worship, iii. 209—ground and reason of, iii. 210—importance of, stated, iii. 212—duty of Christians in reference to, iii. 215—spiritual worship rejected by the Jews, iv. 3—part of the felicity of heaven, iv. 16—not confined to the temple of Jerusalem, iv. 483—is proper because God is publicly acknowledged, iv. 487—in worship we attain just views of ourselves, iv. 488—is a medium of communicating blessing, iv. 489—conveys exalted pleasure to the soul, iv. 490—prepares for heaven, iv. 491—how worshipped in truth, iv. 491, 492; and in spirit, iv. 493—duty of, not taught by the works of God, ix. 14—the Popish notion of a superior and inferior worship considered, x. 331, *et seq.*
- Worship*, Christian, influence of, on the West Indian negroes, ii. 111—113—general effects produced by the public worship of God, ii. 410—special advantages of the publicity of divine worship, ii. 411—moral consequences resulting from, ii. 412—to be acceptable, must be spiritual, ii. 467; of faith, ii. 468; and with purity, ii. 468—the worship of idols does not arise from the same principle, ii. 482—a coming to the altar of God, iii. 142—peculiar character of, iv. 126—effects and consequences of, iv. 127
- *paid to Christ*, considered, x. 315, *et seq.*—by his disciples, established, x. 315, *et seq.*—was not the prostration paid to civil governors, x. 317—by heavenly beings, x. 322



- proved by the various doxologies of Scripture, x. 327; and the testimonies of heathen writers, x. 329—the Apostles defended from the charge of idolatry in worshipping Christ, x. 330, *et seq.*
- Wrath*, existence of, in God, denied by Socinianism, considered, xi. 40, *et seq.*—its nature, xi. 41—not a passion or desire of revenge in God, xi. 43—vessels of, to be distinguished from vessels unto dishonour, xi. 324
- Writing*, taught in Sabbath-schools, a desecration, viii. 155; xii. 101—on hieroglyphical writing, viii. 159, *et seq.*
- Y.
- Yoke*, meaning of the phrase, “My yoke is easy,” iii. 253—why Christianity is compared to, iii. 254—the easy nature of the yoke of Christ, described, iii. 256—misery of those who reject it, iii. 256
- Young*, Dr., his labour on the Rosetta stone, viii. 163; his account of the deciphering of, viii. 164, *et seq.*—his success in hieroglyphical researches, viii. 166
- , Sir William, his “Papers relating to the West Indies,” referred to, vi. 460
- Youth*, religious education of, considered, ii. 41–64—interest which our Saviour took in children, ii. 42—ample provision made by Christianity for the education of, ii. 43—truths which ought to be instilled into them, ii. 44–50—bondage of corruption displayed in, iii. 134—time of, a day of visitation, iv. 7—tendency in, to infidelity, accounted for, iv. 470—evil of educating youth to the ministry as a profession, irrespective of piety, vii. 185
- Z.
- Zabii*, a description of the, vii. 521
- Zeal*, an indispensable qualification of a Christian Missionary, i. 258—the church of Christ to be distinguished by, iii. 276
- Zechariah*, his prophecy concerning the Messiah, iii. 163, *et seq.*—character of, as a Prophet, iii. 471—chronological order of his prophecy, vi. 168—its peculiar character, vi. 168
- Zendavesta*, account of the, ix. 53
- Zephaniah*, the chronological order of his prophecy, vi. 167—its peculiar character, vi. 167
- Zinzendorf*, Count, erroneous notions he entertained, v. 82—his declaration in regard to the Wesleys, v. 142
- Zion*, uses to which the term is applied in Scripture, iii. 163—in what respect the strong hold of the Jews, iii. 178—a prophetic representation of the church of Christ, iii. 275; and of which it is a significant type, iv. 421
- Zodiac*, of Dendera, referred to, vii. 343—Dr. Richardson’s opinion concerning, vii. 343—an article in the “Encyclopædia Britannica” respecting, alluded to, vii. 343—sentiment of Champollion on the, vii. 343—Biot’s calculation on the, vii. 343—that said to be discovered in the temple of Esneh, alluded to, viii. 185
- Zoroaster*, an account of, ix. 53—cause of his success in reforming the religion of Persia, ix. 54—from whence he derived his information, ix. 56—an instance of God’s mercy to the Gentile world, ix. 56—the writings of, extant among the Parsees in India, ix. 56

THE END.

